NATION

TN on avian flu alert after large-scale crow deaths

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Digital fraud victims to get up to Rs 25K

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Suryavanshi storm leads India to world record triumph

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڵار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 7 FEBRUARY 2026 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 18 SHABAN, 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 35 | Pages: 8

PARL ADJOURNED

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

Lok Sabha was adjourned till Monday after opposition protests over security and the US trade deal. As the House met to discuss the 2026-27 Budget, members shouted slogans against the Centre. Ignoring calls for order, Speaker Om Birla adjourned proceedings, noting 19 hours 13 minutes lost to disruptions. In Rajya Sabha, LoP Kharge and Minister Vaishnaw sparred; RS will convene 9 February. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

- It costs around Rs 1.5 crore per hour for both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha to function.
- However, the adjournments during the Budget Session have cost up to Rs 57 crore of taxpayers' money.

RBI keeps interest rates steady at 5.25%

MUMBAI, 6 FEB

The Reserve Bank of India kept its benchmark interest rate unchanged on Friday following trade agreements with the US and the European Union.

The central bank's six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted unanimously to keep the repurchase, or repo rate, at 5.25 per cent. The RBI retained its neutral policy stance, signalling rates will stay low for some time.

US President Trump had announced a cut in tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent from 50 per cent, easing a key pressure point on India's economy and markets

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said external headwinds have intensified, but the successful completion of the trade deal with the US bodes well for the economy. He said the key policy rates will remain at low levels for a long period and may go down even further and added that the economy is in a better place than the sweet spot it was in two months back, which he called a "goldilocks period".

The RBI has cut rates by a total of 125 basis points since February 2025, marking its most aggressive easing cycle since 2019. It reduced rates by 25 basis points at its previous meeting in December.

No assessment has been done on how much the trade deal will contribute to the GDP growth because details are not available, the RBI said.

Consumer price inflation is projected at 2.1 per cent for the current financial year. Inflation in Q4 FY26 is expected to remain above 3 per cent, while CPI in H1 FY27 is estimated to stay above the 4 per cent mark.

The central bank revised its GDP growth estimate for the current FY26 upward to 7.4 per cent from the earlier projection of 7.3 per cent. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 7

CM urges Centre to revise Namma Metro fare hike

Cong blames Centre, BJP says it is the State govt's fault

BENGALURU, 6 FEB

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said he will take up the recent Metro fare hike with the Centre and urge it to reconsider the levels recommended by the FFC. He said that the hike was due to a committee controlled by the Centre.

Siddaramaiah said that Opposition was being "dishonest" in attempting to blame the ruling Congress for the fare hike, saying it was a "deliberate attempt to mislead the public".

"Attributing the fare revision to the Karnataka government is factually incorrect and misleading," he said in a statement on Friday.

The Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) on Thursday announced that Metro rail fares will be revised on a zone-by-zone basis starting 9 February, as part of its Annual Automatic Fare Adjustment system. Namma Metro fares will rise by Rs 1 to Rs 5 across 10 zones, with charges adjusted according to travel distances. The BMRCL said it was bound by the recommendations of the Fare Fixation Committee (FFC) constituted under the Metro Railways (Operation & Maintenance) Act, 2002.

—PTI

Siddaramaiah said that the FFC was, constituted by the Union Government, headed by a former High Court judge, functioning under a Central law and its recommendations are mandated by Parliament itself.

"Neither the State Government nor the BMRCL has the legal authority to override or disregard these recommendations," he stated.

However, the BJP's Bengaluru Central MP PC Mohan said that the Bengaluru Metro fare hike is a consequence of the Karnataka Government's decisions.

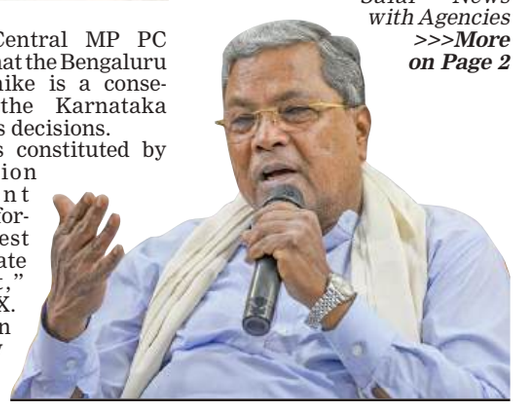
"An FFC is constituted by the Union Government only upon a formal request from the State government," he wrote on X. "This has been explicitly clarified by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs in reply to a Lok Sabha question."

He said that the Karnataka government requested for the FCC after it withdrew support for the Metro. He added that records showed that Karnataka's Urban Development and Finance Department said a fare revision was "imperitive".

Similarly, BJP leader R Ashoka claimed that the fare hike had nothing to do with the Centre, but was due to financial mismanagement of the Congress government.

—Salar News with Agencies

>>>More on Page 2



SC: Courts can't force pregnancy till term

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

Directing medical termination of a 30-week pregnancy of a 17-year-old girl, the Supreme Court on Friday said that courts cannot compel a woman, much less a minor, to continue a pregnancy.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan noted that the girl was impregnated while being in a relationship with a neighbourhood boy and sought to medically terminate her pregnancy.

The apex court said the issue was not whether the relationship was consensual or the result of sexual assault. Stating that ultimately, the fact is that the child to be is not legitimate, and secondly, the mother does not want to bear the child," the bench said.

Counsel for the Maharashtra government said medical reports indicate the child would be born alive if delivered now, adding that the high court had suggested the baby could be placed in an orphanage if the mother does not wish to keep it.

During the hearing, Justice Nagarathna noted that many pregnancies are terminated beyond the limits set by the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, warning that refusals by doctors could push women toward unsafe and unauthorised procedures.

The bench asked Mumbai's JJ Hospital to undertake the medical termination of the pregnancy of the minor while ensuring that all necessary medical safeguards are followed. The top court said it will release the operating part of the order for the benefit of the hospital, and the detailed order will follow. *—PTI*

31 killed, 169 hurt in Islamabad blast at Shia mosque

ISLAMABAD, 6 FEB

A suicide bomber blew himself up at a Shia mosque during Friday prayers in Pakistan's capital, killing at least 31 people and injuring 169 others, in one of the worst terror attacks targeting the community. The powerful explosion, which was heard from a distance, took place at Khadijatul Kubra mosque-cum-imambargah in Tarlai, Islamabad. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the blast. However, police sources said that the attacker was a foreign national and had links with Fitna al Khwaraji, a term used for Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

AAP leader shot dead in Jalandhar, Oppn slams govt

CHANDIGARH, 6 FEB

Punjab AAP leader Lucky Oberoi was shot dead outside a gurdwara in Jalandhar's Model Town. The assailants on a motorcycle fired 8-10 shots at him as he was preparing to leave in his Mahindra Thar. Oberoi, 38, was rushed to hospital but succumbed to his injuries. Opposition leaders criticised the government, with Partap Singh Bajwa stating, "If even ruling party leaders aren't safe, what hope remains for citizens?" Sukhbir Badal accused the government of failing to control law and order, citing numerous recent murders. *—PTI*

India tests fires nuclear capable Agni-3 missile

BALASORE, 6 FEB

India on Friday successfully test-fired nuclear weapons-capable Agni-3 ballistic missile from the Chandipur off Odisha coast. It has a strike range of more than 3,000km, officials said. The surface-to-surface missile was launched by the personnel of Strategic Forces Command from a mobile launcher as part of a regular training exercise. The missile was picked up randomly from the production lot. Agni-3 is one of the sophisticated and accurate missiles of its class and has already been inducted into the armed forces. It can carry a payload weighing 1.5 tonnes for at least 3,000 kilometres. *—PTI*

Delhi biker falls to death in pit

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

A motorcyclist died after falling into a 15-feet-deep pit dug by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) for construction work in Delhi's Janakpuri area, police said on Friday.

The deceased, Kamal Bhayani, 25, was a resident of Kailashpuri. He was working at the call centre of a private bank.

DCP (West) Darade Sharad Bhaskar said, "At around 8 am, a woman called the police control room to report that a man is lying inside a pit approximately 15 feet deep and was not moving."

The pit had been dug by the Delhi Jal Board. Preliminary investigation indicates that the pit was dug at a DJB construction site, which was barricaded, a police officer said.

"We are investigating all angles. This road has been closed. The pit was dug on Thursday. It is possible that the person used to take this route every day and was unaware," the DCP said. *—PTI*

Kamal Bhayani, 25, died after accidentally riding his bike into a uncovered pit dug for construction Delhi Jal Board, in New Delhi, Friday *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 4, 5

Ambulance leaves body on road, kin carry it in 'jholi'

PALGHAR, 6 FEB

Relatives of a deceased patient were forced to carry his body home in a makeshift cloth stretcher after a private ambulance allegedly abandoned it midway in Palghar district, officials said. Shailesh Magan Wagadada, admitted to Vedanta Medical College Hospital with respiratory distress and internal bleeding, died on 3 February.

While transporting the body to his village, the ambulance driver stopped at Chambharshet, citing poor road conditions ahead.

With no option, the family walked about 1.8 km carrying the body in a 'jholi'.

The Zilla Parishad said the road was motorable and completed in 2024–25. *—PTI*

SC bins PK's plea to annul Bihar elections

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a petition filed by the Jan Suraaj Party (JSP), founded by former political strategist Prashant Kishor, seeking annulment of the 2025 Bihar Assembly elections over alleged violations of the Model Code of Conduct.

The party alleged that the Bihar government violated the MCC by disbursing Rs 15,600 crore under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana ahead of the polls, thereby denying a level playing field to other political parties. A bench comprising CJI Surya Kant pulled up the petitioner for approaching the court after losing the elections and directed it to move the Patna High Court, noting that the matter concerned only one State.

"How many votes did you get? Once people reject you, you use the judicial forum to get relief," the CJI remarked, adding that the plea amounted to a composite election petition seeking to declare the entire election null and void. Senior advocate CU Singh, appearing for the JSP, argued that Rs 10,000 was transferred to over 35 lakh women beneficiaries after the MCC came into force, despite the State facing a fiscal deficit.

The bench observed that while the issue of "freebies" could be examined in appropriate cases, this petition was not maintainable before the apex court. *—PTI*

4 B'luru tourists found dead at Bihar dharamshala

PATNA, 6 FEB

Four tourists, including two women, from Bengaluru were found hanging inside their room at a dharamshala in Rajgir, a major Buddhist and Jain pilgrimage town in Nalanda, Bihar, on Friday, police said.

Rajgir Dy SP Sunil Kumar Singh said the incident came to light around 9.40am after the dharamshala manager alerted the local police about a foul smell emanating from one of the rooms.

Acting on the information, police reached the spot and broke open the door. "On entering the room, all four occupants were found hanging," Singh said.

Mobile phones recovered from the scene helped establish that the deceased were residents of Bengaluru, he said. The identities of the victims have not yet been officially released.

A forensic team of Patna was called in to examine and collect evidence.

The bodies have been sent for post-mortem to ascertain the exact cause of death.

Police said efforts were underway to inform the families of the deceased. "Further legal action will be initiated after the forensic analysis and autopsy reports are received," Singh added. *—PTI*

NETFLIX REMOVES TEASER

Yogi orders FIR against 'Ghooskhor Pandat'

LUCKNOW/MUMBAI, 6 FEB

The Lucknow Police have registered an FIR against the director of the upcoming Netflix film 'Ghooskhor Pandat' over allegations of hurting religious and caste sentiments and disturbing public order.

The FIR was lodged late Thursday on the instructions of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at Hazratganj police station after police took suo motu cognisance of the film's teaser and promotional material circulated on social media. Police said the title appeared "objectionable at first glance" and allegedly targeted and demeaned a particular caste, triggering sharp reactions and warnings of protests from several organisations. The case has been registered under relevant sections for promoting social animosity and threatening public peace. The National Human Rights Commission has also issued a notice to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting following a complaint alleging casteist content.

'Ghooskhor Pandat' stars Manoj Bajpayee. The FIR alleges that the teaser hurts religious sentiments and is casteist *—PTI*

Responding to the backlash, filmmaker Neeraj Pandey and actor Manoj Bajpayee said the film focuses on a flawed individual and does not represent any caste or community. Pandey said the term "Pandat" was a colloquial name for a fictional character and acknowledged that the title had hurt some viewers. *— PTI*

City motorcyclist attacks car, makes obscene gestures

BENGALURU, 6 FEB

In an incident of road rage in the City, a biker stopped a car, making obscene gestures, and then attacked the vehicle on Friday. A video recorded by the car driver, Aditya, showed the man standing in front of the car near Madavara Junction, shouting and making obscene gestures. He then broke the side-view mirror, mounted his motorcycle, and turning around kicked the car. A case has been filed at Madanayakanahalli Police Station. *—Agencies*

Mysuru land meant for minorities reclaimed

MYSURU, 6 FEB

Taluk administration officials led by Mysuru taluk Tahsildar Maheshkumar cleared encroachments on government land in the early hours of Friday using a JCB earthmoving machine at Survey Number 87 in Mysuru taluk, reclaiming 38 guntas of government property worth Rs 38 crore, according to Tahsildar Maheshkumar. The district administration had allotted this 38 guntas of government land to the Department of Other Backward Classes and Minorities Welfare for the construction of post-matric hostels for boys and girls. An order to this effect had been issued by the then Deputy Commissioner on 30 August 2010. Private individuals had not only encroached this government property but had also used the land as a parking lot, collecting parking fees from vehicle owners. Mysuru taluk administration cleared the land, paving the way for construction of the hostels. *—SALAR NEWS*

35-yr-old rapes, impregnates minor relative

CHIKKABALLAPURA, 6 FEB

A Class 10 student in Raguttazhalli, Chintamani taluk, was allegedly raped by her distant relative, Sri Hari, 35, during Dasara holidays. The girl was studying at Kittur Chennamma Residential School left the hostel on 20 September and stayed at her house until 29 October. During this period, Sri Hari allegedly assaulted her, leading to pregnancy.Upon returning, the warden asked about her health, and she said her menstrual cycle was fine. In November, she missed a routine health check, citing she needed to go home. Suspicious, authorities questioned her, and her parentse. In January, a nurse found her pregnant. Her parents initially denied it. Warden Savitha Kumari and Principal DV Nagarathanamma have been suspended for delayed action. The outsourced nurse was terminated and replaced. *—SALAR NEWS*

1st phase of B'luru Business Corridor will finish in 1.5 yrs

Road's not in Budget; 400 landowners compensated: DKS

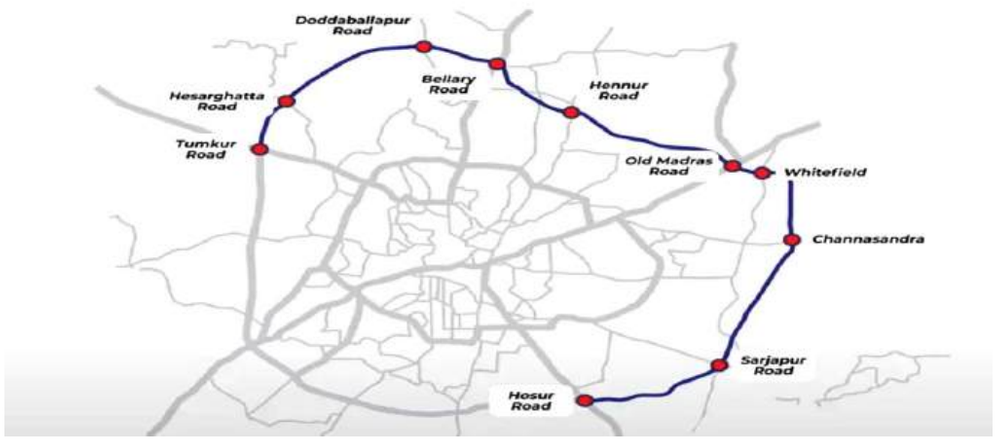
BENGALURU, 6 FEB

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Friday said that the first phase of Bengaluru Business Corridor (BBC) would be completed in one and a half years.

"I held a review meeting on Bengaluru Business Corridor with BDA officials. I gave away cheques, certificates and TDRs (Transfer of Development Rights) to land owners. Out of 650 land owners who have consented to give their land, 400 of them have got the compensation so far," he told reporters at the Vidhana Soudha, here.

Asked if there would be allocation for BBC in this State Budget, Shivakumar replied in negative. "We have already taken a loan of Rs 26,000 crore from Hudco. We may be able to save some money from it.

Shivakumar said that the Union Budget was not expected to funds for the Tunnel Road Project. "It will be on Build Operate Transfer mode. The government will only pay 40 per cent of the cost. The operator has to take the risk."



The corridor aims to connect Tumakuru Road with Hosur Road via Whitefeild –BDA

About reported delay in issuing of E-khata, Shivakumar said at a meeting with Urban Development Secretary and e-Khata officials he had asked them to clear all applications within two days. "We have cleared 9.31 lakh of the 9.34 lakh applications so far".

The government plans to set up 10 citizen centers on the lines of Passport Seva Kendra from 31 March this year. "GBA will start one center per corporation," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

Asked about the fate of buildings on B khata sites, Shivakumar said, "We are trying to regularise the sites first and are not looking into buildings on B khata sites yet." He said 7,000 people have far applied for B- khata conversion. "I have asked the officials to visit the sites first and prepare the maps. I have also instructed them to clear the B khata conversion within 15 days. A total of 1.20 lakh applications have been received for khata conversion, of which 86 per cent have been cleared and 18,000 applications are pending." Shivakumar said a delegation of representatives from Denmark and South Africa have expressed interest in the State. *—Salar News*

'1ST STATE, THEN PARTY'

CM tells BJP to stop politicising Metro fare hike

BENGALURU, 6 FEB

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah lashed out at BJP leaders alleging that they were politicising the Namma Metro fare hike.

He claimed that BJP leaders were more interested in pleasing its High Command that serve the State. "I urge the BJP to stop playing politics with people's pain, and start doing its duty—first to Karnataka, and then to its party."

Siddaramaiah wrote: "Why didn't BJP MPs from Karnataka raise this issue forcefully in Parliament? Why didn't BJP ministers from Karnataka oppose high fare slabs at the Union level? Why is the BJP Karnataka acting as a spokesperson for Delhi instead of standing with Bengalureans?" He added that the fare hike was part of the Centre's larger pattern to hurt Karnataka through "reduced tax devolution, denial of fair grants and delays in infrastructure support."

CM said that that he would be formally taking up this matter with the Union Government, urging it to "reconsider the fare levels recommended by the FFC, explore mechanisms to moderate or rationalise fares, especially for daily commuters, students, and low-income group and examine policy options that balance financial sustainability with social equity."

Similarly, BJP leader R Ashoka claimed that the fare hike had nothing to do with the Centre, but was due to financial mismanagement of the Congress government. The Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Ltd on Thursday announced that it would be hiked by Rs 1 to Rs 5 across 10 zones based on recommendations of the Fare Fixation Committee (FFC).

However, BJP leader R Ashoka accusing the Congress government of financial mismanagement leading to fare hike, said "when governance fails and the treasury is mismanaged, citizens are forced to pay the price". *—PTI*

'He is High Command': DKS quips as Yathindra says dad will stay CM

MYSURU, 6 FEB

Congress MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah claimed that the party High Command has given a clear signal that his father Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will complete his full five-year term, much to the annoyance of Deputy CM DK Shivakumar.

"It's a settled issue," Yathindra said in Mysuru on Friday. "The High Command might not have said it openly, but have given a clear signal that there will not be any leadership change.... No one has said that Siddaramaiah should be removed or will be removed."

Shivakumar, who has allegedly been in a power tussle with Siddaramaiah for the top post, responded to Yathindra's claims in Puttur: "Yathindra is our High Command, and let's accept what he says very respectfully. Once he has said (it), it's like the High Command has (spoken)."

Yathindra had also flayed the Centre for not appropriately allocating funds to the State, and noted that the Karnataka government would soon be presenting its Budget. "The financial situation is such that we are not getting the revenue like in the past," he said.

He also welcomed a Bengaluru special court's ruling in the MUDA scam case, which involved both his parents – Siddaramaiah and BM Parvathi – along with 14 others.

The court had recently accepted the 'B' report (closure report) filed by the Karnataka Lokayukta police, giving clean chit to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Parvathi and others who were facing allegations of illegalities in allotment of 14 sites to Parvathi by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), according to the sources. *—Salar News with Agencies*

INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Agriculture Minister N Chaluvarayaswamy, during the inauguration of the three day International Trade Fair 2026, at Palace Grounds in Bengaluru on Friday. Farmers will sell their organic and millet produce directly to consumers here at the venue **MOHAMMED ASAD**

Bus catches fire in Nelamangala, none hurt

BENGALURU, 6 FEB

As many as thirty passengers had a narrow escape on Friday when a private sleeper bus they were travelling in allegedly veered off the road, fell into a ditch and later caught fire on the outskirts of the city, according to the police.

The tragic incident occurred near Nelamangala on the Bengaluru-Tumakuru highway, they said.

The police further said, the accident was allegedly caused due to the driver's negligence, with the bus first hitting an electric pole before plunging into a ditch.

A short-circuit is being suspected that triggered the fire. Soon after the accident, all the passengers managed to get out of the bus on their own before the flames spread, a senior police officer said.

However, it is yet to be ascertained whether the driver fell asleep at the wheel, leading to the vehicle hitting the electric pole.

The exact cause of the accident is part of the ongoing investigation, the police officer said.

"The Nelamangala traffic police and fire personnel rushed to the spot and successfully doused the blaze. However, the bus was completely gutted," he added. A case has been registered and further investigation into the incident is underway, police said. *—Agencies*

Child falls in open drain outside school, saved

BENGALURU, 6 FEB

A Class 1 student narrowly avoided a serious accident on Friday after falling into an open drain in Govindapura, Sarvagnanagar. The incident, outside the school, involved a drain left uncovered by a missing concrete slab. The construction work, reportedly by Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), caused roadblocks, forcing children to walk along the road's edge. Locals said, "No safety measures were put in place at the site, despite daily movement of young children." Residents accused both the Water Board and GBA of gross negligence. Eyewitnesses found iron rods at the scene, increasing injury risk. The child was rescued without major injuries. A video shows the open drain with scattered clothes and books; the child was seen sobbing. *—Agencies*

Cong MLC writes to ACS, DGP, IGP over BJP's ads

BENGALURU, 6 FEB

Congress MLC Ramesh Babu writes to Umashankar SR, Additional Chief Secretary of the Home Department, and the Director General/ Inspector General of Police MA Saleem, seeking legal action against people responsible for advertisements published by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) Karnataka in various newspapers.

In his letter, shared with press on Friday, Babu alleged that the ads depicted Mahatma Gandhi in a way that could incite violence, hurts public sentiments, and could disturb public harmony.

The advertisement in question were printed by at least half a dozen of leading newspapers and seemingly depicted Mahatma Gandhi raising his stick as if to beat Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Rahul Gandhi for opposing the rural employment VB-G RAM G scheme.

Babu noted that Mahatma Gandhi was an internationally revered symbol of non-violence, yet the ad has "wrongly" depicted him in "connection with violent acts". It may "provoke unrest among the public," he wrote.

Babu said that the BJP Karnataka should be booked under various sections of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, including defamation, incitement to violence and wounding public sentiments.

Several other provisions are also applicable, he added. *—Salar News*

Don't halt ops at profitable airports like Belagavi: MP

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

Karnataka BJP MP Iranna Kadadi on Friday raising the issue of dwindling air connectivity at Belagavi airport in the Rajya Sabha, urged the Centre to take strict action against airlines that have discontinued services despite high passenger demand.

Raising the matter during Zero Hour in the Upper House, Kadadi pointed out that while Belagavi was supposed to be connected to 13 cities through five airlines under the Udaan-3 scheme, the connectivity has now been reduced to just five cities, it is being served by two airlines.

"Airlines only provide services until they get viability gap funding or subsidy from the government. As soon as the subsidy expires, they stop flying," he said.

The MP highlighted that despite the end of the Udaan-3 scheme, passenger numbers remained robust.

The airport recorded 3,40,300 passengers in 2024-25, marking a 9 per cent increase over the previous year. Load factors on routes to Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Hyderabad ranged between 85 per cent and 95 per cent.

"When flights were running at more than 90 per cent capacity and were providing benefits even without a subsidy, it is wrong to stop service through airlines," Kadadi said.

Built by the Royal Air Force in 1942, Belagavi airport serves a strategically important region bordering Karnataka, Maharashtra and Goa. *—PTI*

Have exposed Congress' corruption: LoP Ashoka

BENGALURU, 6 FEB

Opposition Leader R Ashoka on Thursday said the opposition had exposed what he termed the "swallowing eyes" corruption of the Congress during the special session and would intensify the fight against it.

Addressing a press conference, Ashoka said he had submitted five documents and audio records related to the alleged Rs 6,000 crore scam in the Excise Department, yet the government was still seeking proof.

He recalled that when contractors earlier alleged 40 per cent corruption, Congress had targeted the BJP government, but now liquor traders have spoken of 80 per cent corruption. Despite this, CM Siddaramaiah and Excice Minister RB Thimmappur had not resigned, he alleged.

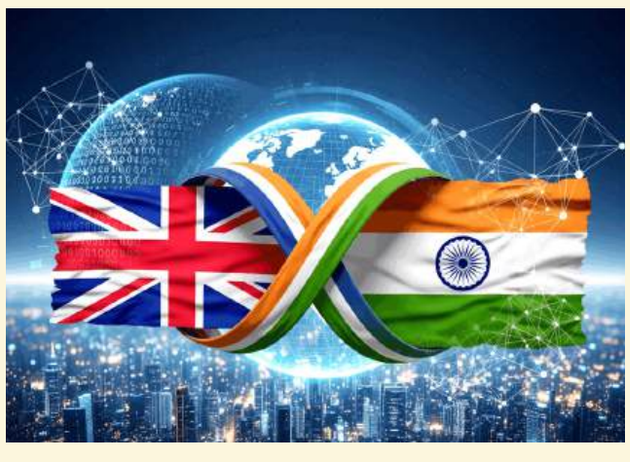
Ashoka said the BJP would fight to recover Rs 6,000 crore of public money. On the upcoming Greater Bengaluru Authority polls, Ashoka said that discussion will be held with all MLAs and district office bearers on Saturday.

"Earlier, when Siddaramaiah was CM, BJP won in BBMP," Ashoka said, exuding confidence about the party's chance. "Now, since they have continuously imposed taxes, people will give a slap to Congress. We will strategise to win five corporations for BJP." *—SALAR NEWS*

IN-A-FIRST

VTU, UK firm tie up for Super Intelligence

BENGALURU, 6 FEB



VTU on Friday said it has signed an agreement with UK-based company Chiac ASI to introduce Artificial Super Intelligence, a technology considered to surpass conventional AI.

Visvesvaraya Techno logical University said it would be adopting ASI "for the first time as part of its efforts to prepare students for emerging technologies."

"VTU has entered into an agreement with Chiac ASI, a company based in the United Kingdom. Chiac is the world's first ASI research institution. At present, five major companies, including Meta and Microsoft, are engaged in research in this field," it said in a statement.

The university said Chiac ASI has published significant research at an international conference on controlling the potentially dangerous behaviour of ASI using Indian sutras, for which it has received an award.

The academic and research agreement was signed by VTU Vice-Chancellor Dr S Vidyashankar and Chiac ASI CEO Chandrashekar Nagaraju.

Dr Vidyashankar said technology was advancing rapidly, and VTU was aligning itself with emerging trends.

"We are adopting Artificial Super Intelligence, which is expected to create a revolution by 2030, while also addressing concerns related to the rapid expansion of AI," he said.

He added that under the agreement, Chiac ASI would offer free internships to more than 1,000 students and provide ASI textbooks to engineering college faculty for effective teaching. "These are not ordinary books, but self-updating research textbooks that evolve as the field progresses. Workshops on ASI have also been conducted for faculty members of VTU-affiliated colleges," he said. *—PTI*

7 Naxalites killed in Maharashtra encounters

GADCHIROLI, 6 FEB

Seven Naxalites including top leader Prabhakar were killed in encounters with police in eastern Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district while a police jawan also succumbed to the injuries suffered during a gunfight, officials said on Saturday. The anti-Naxal operation was going on in the area for the last three days. Prabhakar alias Loketi Chandar Rao, who hailed from Kamareddy in Telangana and was in-charge of the Maoists' Gadchiroli Division Committee, West Sub-Zonal Bureau and `Company No 10', carried a reward of Rs 25 lakh on his head, officials said. The bodies of seven Maoists incliding four male and three female have been recovered. The police also recovered three AK-47 rifles, one SLR and one .303 rifle.—*PTI*

TMC MLAs protest against BJP MLA's madrasa remark

KOLKATA, 6 FEB

Chaos erupted during the third day of the West Bengal assembly's budget session after TMC MLAs protested against BJP MLA Agnimitra Paul's remarks suggesting that funding for madrasas might foster anti-national elements. Paul said that allocations for madrasas may not aid minorities but could instead promote criminal elements, claiming, "funds allocated for madrasas may not help in uplifting the minorities and instead boost the growth of elements who end up becoming criminals instead of doctors, engineers and teachers." Senior TMC ministers Firhad Hakim and Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay condemned her comments, with Hakim urging an apology.—*PTI*

Delhi court rejects Alka Lamba's plea in cop assault case

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

A Delhi court on Friday dismissed Congress leader Alka Lamba's plea challenging the framing of charges against her in a case linked to an alleged assault on police during a protest at Jantar Mantar in 2024. Special Judge Dig Vinay Singh said the magistrate had rightly found a prima facie case, noting that proof beyond reasonable doubt was not required at this stage. Lamba is accused of obstructing police, disobeying orders and blocking a public road while leading a protest for women's reservation on 29 July, 2024. The court relied on video footage and statements of police witnesses showing her jumping barricades, pushing police personnel and leading protesters beyond the permitted area at the site.—*PTI*

—*ANI*

Bathroom cleaner chemical used in Tirupati laddu: CM

KALUGOTLA, 6 FEB

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister **N Chandrababu Naidu** on Friday alleged that Tirupati laddus were prepared using ghee adulterated with chemicals used for cleaning bathrooms during the previous YSRCP government's tenure. Addressing a village meeting at Kalugotla in Kurnool district, he accused the former regime of undermining the sanctity and prestige of Lord Venkateswara Swamy by supplying contaminated prasadam. Naidu also claimed that the same adulterated ghee was supplied to the Srisailam Temple. Speaking on the sidelines of a Pattadar Passbook distribution programme in the Yemmiganur constituency, the Chief Minister alleged that such chemically adulterated ghee was used in laddu preparation for five years under the YSRCP rule. —*PTI*

India-US trade deal a trap: Cong MPs

They also raised issue of ex-Army chief's memoir

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi, suspended 8 Lok Sabha MPs, and other Opposition MPs protest on the Parliament premises during the ongoing Budget Session, in New Delhi —*ANI*

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

Congress and Opposition MPs staged a protest in the Parliament House complex on Friday over the India-US trade deal and the controversy surrounding the former Army chief's unpublished memoir.

Additionally, they raised the issue on the suspension of eight MPs.

After the Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned till 11am on Monday, the opposition MPs gathered near the Makar Dwar of Parliament and raised slogans such as "Dictatorship will not be tolerated," "Narendra, surrender," and "Stop murdering democracy."

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the MPs suspended for the remainder of the current Budget session of Parliament, and several other MPs participated in the protest.

> **The truth is that Narendra Modi doesn't have the courage to answer the questions we've asked**
>
> -Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress President

They also held a large banner that read "Trap Deal," referring to the India-US trade agreement.

While leaving the Parliament House complex, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi took a swipe at PM and told reporters, "jo uchit samjho woh karo"(do whatever you think is right).

Rahul had on Wednesday cited Naravane's unreleased memoir to claim that Modi shed responsibility during the India-China conflict in 2020 and passed the buck on to the general.

Congress whip in the Lok Sabha and one of the suspended MPs, Manickam Tagore, said the fight would be taken forward on the issue of PM's "failures."

Meanwhile, lashing out at Modi over his speech in the Rajya Sabha, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday said the PM doesn't have the courage to answer the questions posed to him and claimed that the government doesn't want to run the House in a democratic manner.

Speaking with reporters, Kharge said "repeating falsehoods" has been Modi's job and in his 97-minute reply to the discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, he didn't say anything important or necessary. —*PTI*

SHOT MULTIPLE TIMES

Punjab AAP leader shot dead; Mann-led govt under fire

CHANDIGARH, 6 FEB

Punjab Aam Aadmi Party leader Lucky Oberoi was shot dead by an unidentified assailant outside a gurdwara in Jalandhar's Model Town on Friday, police said.

The incident took place around 7.30am, when the 43-year-old was leaving the gurdwara in his SUV.

CCTV footage showed when Oberoi came out of the gurdwara and sat in his vehicle, an assailant wearing a black-coloured hoodie approached him on foot and opened indiscriminate fire, and fled along with his accomplice, who was waiting for him at a short distance on a scooter.

Oberoi was hit with multiple shots, and was rushed to a hospital in an unconscious state.

He succumbed to the bullet injuries, ACP Jalandhar, Parminder Singh, said over the phone.

In the firing incident, the window panes of Oberoi's SUV and another vehicle were shattered.

CCTV footage shows the unidentified assailant wearing a black hoodie and mask approaching AAP leader (inset) Lucky Oberoi's vehicle —PTI

Satwinderpal Singh alias Lucky Oberoi was a Jalandhar-based AAP leader, in charge of a ward in Jalandhar Cantt.

The assailants may have carried out a recce of Oberoi's movements, police sources said.

Opposition parties hit out at the Bhagwant Mann-led dispensation over the incident, alleging the collapse of law and order in the state under AAP rule.

Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa, in a post on X, said, "The shocking daylight murder of @AAPPunjab leader Lucky Oberoi outside a gurdwara in Jalandhar, exposes the grim reality: if even ruling party leaders aren't safe, what hope remains for ordinary citizens?" —*PTI*

Instead of focusing on marks, focus on improving life: Modi

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed students during the ninth edition of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha 2026', emphasising that exams are like festivals meant to be celebrated.

He advised students to change their lifestyle patterns only when they want to, and to view education as a means of overall development, not just marks. Modi stressed that comfort zones do not shape

life; one's way of living does. He said, "Education should not feel like a burden. It needs our total involvement. Instead of focusing on marks, everyone should focus on where they have made it in life."

Modi encouraged students to trust their own study patterns, listen to suggestions, and continuously improve through personal experience. He warned against obsession with marks, saying, "No one remembers the highest scorer last year."

Modi also noted that life skills and professional skills are equally important, urging balance in all aspects of life. The event broke registration records with over 4.5 crore participants. —*PTI*

Omar presents Rs 1.27L cr FY26-27 budget for J&K

JAMMU, 6 FEB

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister **Omar Abdullah** on Friday presented a Rs 1.27 lakh crore Budget for 2026-2027 in the Legislative Assembly, with focus on growth and economic prosperity.

He said his government is committed to promote investment, innovation and participatory governance.

Abdullah, who also holds the finance portfolio, estimated total gross receipts and expenditure at Rs 1,27,767 crore.

While Rs 80,640 crore has been earmarked under revenue expenditure, Rs 33,127 crore under capital expenditure in the Budget estimates for 2026-27.

The expected revenue receipt is projected at Rs 90,018 crore, while capital receipts are estimated at Rs 23,749 crore.

He said the Union Territory's own revenues, including tax and non-tax sources, are estimated at Rs 31,800 crore.

He said J&K is expected to receive Rs 42,752 crore as central assistance and Rs 13,400 crore under centrally sponsored schemes.

The tax-to-GDP ratio is projected at 6.6 per cent for 2026-27. —*PTI*

Shah visits J&K's forward area along Int'l Border

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday visited forward areas along the International Border in Kathua, marking the start of his two-day tour of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. He visited the border outposts of Gurnam and Bobiyian in the Hiranagar sector and interacted with the Border Security Force personnel guarding the frontier, the officials said. Meanwhile, the National Investigation Agency on Friday carried out searches at the Government Medical College in the Anantnag district of J&K in connection with the "white collar" terror module busted in November last year. —*PTI*

Karti Chidambaram dismisses any rift in DMK-led alliance

CHENNAI, 6 FEB

Senior Congress leader Karti P Chidambaram on Friday dismissed reports of friction within the DMK-led alliance in Tamil Nadu, asserting that the INDIA bloc remains cohesive under the leadership of the Dravidian major in the State.

Addressing reporters, the Sivaganga MP said alliance composition and seat-sharing arrangements are usually finalised well before elections and should not be misinterpreted as signs of discord.

Chidambaram also responded to the controversy surrounding references to former Army chief MM Naravane's 'unpublished

TN CM MK Stalin unveiled a Rs 85.80 lakh statue of German philosopher and political theorist Karl Marx in Chennai —*X/MKSTALIN*

memoir', which mentions the 2020 India-China conflict. Rejecting claims that the book was never formally released, he said the idea of a release has evolved in the digital era. "Today, even a post on X, Facebook or Instagram amounts to a release," he said.

LoP Rahul Gandhi was earlier disallowed in the Lok Sabha from quoting an article based on excerpts from the book during proceedings. Chidambaram alleged that objections raised were aimed at suppressing uncomfortable facts.

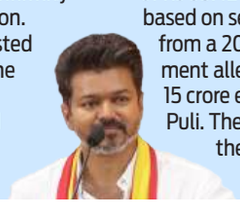
Reaffirming Congress's position ahead of the 2026 TN Assembly elections, Chidambaram said the party remains firmly committed to the DMK-led coalition. —*PTI*

'TN Cabinet approved 2023 Hyundai project'

PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss stated that the Tamil Nadu Cabinet approved Hyundai's 2023 expansion project on 5 February, exposing the false claims of high implementation rates by the DMK government. He highlighted two MoUs signed in 2023 and 2024, worth Rs 26,180 crore, which he claims remain unimplemented, with less than Rs 500 crore invested. Anbumani criticised the government for misleading claims, asserting that only 8.20 per cent of signed MoUs have materialised since 2021. —*PTI*

MADRAS HC REJECTS VIJAY'S PLEA CHALLENGING I-T DEPT

The Madras High Court dismissed a writ petition by TVK Chief **Vijay**, challenging the Income Tax department's order for him to pay Rs 1.50 crore in penalties for allegedly failing to disclose his full income for 2015-16. Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy said the penalty order was within the stipulated time and lacked any infirmity warranting intervention. Vijay's counsel requested liberty to challenge the order further, but the judge stated he could appeal to the appellate authority. Vijay



claimed he declared an income of Rs 35.42 crore for 2016-17, but based on seizure documents from a 2015 raid, the department alleged he concealed Rs 15 crore earned from the film Puli. The department ordered the penalty on 30 June, 2022. —*PTI*

PROTEST AGAINST KUKI-ZO MLAS

Total shutdown affects people in Manipur's Churachandpur

CHURACHANDPUR/ IMPHAL, 6 FEB

Normal life in Manipur's Churachandpur district was affected after two tribal bodies imposed a "total shutdown" in the Kuki-Zo-dominated district to protest the participation of MLAs from the community in the government formation in the state, officials said.

On Friday morning, bandh supporters holding sticks stopped vehicles in parts of the district headquarters town. Markets remained shut and vehicles off the roads. Educational and government offices also witnessed poor attendance, they said.

The Churachandpur unit of the Kuki Students Organisation imposed a 24-hour total shutdown from Friday midnight in the district, while another outfit Joint Forum of Seven, imposed a shutdown in Kuki-Zo areas from 6am to 6pm.

KWOHR's public rally against the participation of Kuki-Zo MLAs in the formation of the Manipur Government, in Churachandpur on Friday —*ANI*

The shutdown was more effectively visible in the Tuibong area of the district headquarters town. The situation remained tense in the district and additional security forces have been deployed in vital points of district headquarters town, officials said.

Kuki Women Organisation for Human Rights (KWOHR) held a mass public rally on Friday afternoon. KWOHR stated that the protest aims to express strong opposition to any move.

On Thursday evening, clashes broke out between a mob and security forces near Tuibong forest gate. The clashes went on till 3am. —PTI

WB BLO dies, family blames SIR workload

KOLKATA, 6 FEB

A 58-year-old booth level officer (BLO), Maya Mukhopadhyay, died of cardiac arrest in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, prompting political controversy. Her family blamed work pressure from the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, claiming she was under severe mental stress after being assigned BLO duties.

Her son Rubel Mondal said, "She kept saying that if names were deleted, villagers might come and attack our house." The family added that she was reluctant to take on BLO responsibilities due to age-related ailments.

The local administration confirmed her death but did not comment further. The incident has intensified political tensions ahead of April's Assembly elections, with TMC leaders blaming the pressure of the SIR process.

The CPI(M) and Congress called for investigations, while the BJP accused the ruling party of politicising the tragedy. —*PTI*

Decide on BRS MLAs: SC raps T'gana Speaker

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

The Supreme Court issued a final warning to the Telangana Assembly Speaker **Gaddam Prasad Kumar**, stating contempt proceedings will commence if he does not resolve the disqualification petitions against 10 BRS MLAs who defected to Congress within three weeks.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and AG Masih expressed frustration over delays, with Justice Karol urging senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, representing the speaker, not to trivialise the matter, saying, "We request you not to make reels out of it. This is what is happening. Do not do it. What is happening is, it is a new industry."

Singhvi explained the decision was made in one case, with two others pending, and requested three weeks, citing municipal elections.

The court had previously directed the speaker to submit a status report, and in November 2025, issued a contempt notice for non-compliance. The court reiterated that the speaker acts as a tribunal under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, which deals with disqualification on grounds of defection. —*PTI*

—AI

Goa police warns of arrest if selfies forced on tourists

PANAJI, 6 FEB

Goa Police have launched a crackdown on domestic tourists harassing foreign nationals on beaches, warning of on-the-spot detention for clicking photographs without consent or forcing selfies. The action follows repeated complaints involving foreign women. In a recent incident, Calangute police booked two tourists from Odisha for allegedly harassing a Russian woman on Calangute beach. The accused, Akash Minaz, 19, and Dhayan Tappo, 34, are accused of taking photos without permission and touching her inappropriately. Police said strict action will be taken against anyone engaging in such behaviour. —*PTI*

—FB/RINKU SINGH

Cricketer Rinku Singh's Facebook account hacked

ALIGARH, 6 FEB

Cricketer Rinku Singh's Facebook account has been hacked, police said on Friday, adding that it is unclear whether any financial fraud has occurred. Senior Superintendent of Police Neeraj Kumar said Singh informed him earlier this week about the suspected breach. Following this, Singh's brother, Sonu Singh, lodged a written complaint with the city cybercrime cell. Police said the Aligarh-born cricketer had not actively monitored the account for months due to his busy schedule. A detailed investigation is underway. —*PTI*

Kerala spa worker gangraped for not paying 'goon tax'

PATHANAMTHITTA, 6 FEB

A spa employee in Thiruvalla was allegedly gangraped after refusing to pay the "goonda tax" demanded by a criminal gang led by one Subin Alexander, known as 'Marana Subin,' police said. Three accused, including Subin, have been arrested, while three others are absconding. Police said the gang demanded Rs 50,000 from a spa in Manjadi on 1 February. When the staff refused, the woman was assaulted. The accused also robbed cash and intimidated other staff. The investigation is going on, the police said. —*ANI*

Former J'khand CM seeks probe into ₹10K cr missing from treasury

RANCHI, 6 FEB

Jharkhand opposition leader and former chief minister Babulal Marandi on Thursday demanded a high-level probe into claims that Rs 10,000 crore went missing from the State treasury, following allegations by JD(U) MLA Saryu Roy.

Roy said the discrepancy surfaced during an audit conducted when Rameshwar was finance minister. He claimed a meeting of secretaries was convened but their explanations were unclear. Roy also alleged that Finance Minister Radha Krishna Kishore sought a review last year, but the file was forwarded to the chief secretary and remains pending. "Why is the government avoiding an investigation?" Marandi asked.

The Congress, part of the ruling JMM-led alliance, rejected the allegations, saying that the irregularities dated back to the BJP government's tenure. —*PTI*

TN on avian flu alert after large-scale crow deaths

Advisory says dead birds must be either burnt or buried

CHENNAI, 6 FEB

The Tamil Nadu government today sounded a high alert after reports of large-scale crow deaths in various parts of the state, triggering concerns over a potential outbreak of avian influenza.

In a swift response to the mounting biosecurity threat, the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying, and Fisheries issued an advisory mandating stringent precautionary measures for poultry farmers and handlers of wild birds.

The Director of Public Health, Dr A Somasundaram said, the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine (DPH) has appealed to the public to follow strict safety protocols.

"Based on the Centre's circular regarding Avian Flu in Tamil Nadu, we have issued the advisory," he added.

The DPH has advised individuals to seek immediate medical assistance if they experience flu-like symptoms, including cough, cold, fever, or breathing difficulties. Specific caution has been urged for those working in slaughterhouses and personnel handling sick or dead birds.

The Department of Animal Husbandry has mandated stringent precautionary measures for poultry farmers and handlers of wild birds —*PTI*

Meanwhile, the Animal Husbandry department has directed its officials to intensify surveillance and step up vigil to detect any unusual sickness or mortality among crows, migratory birds, and commercial poultry.

Sources said under the new protocol, veterinary staff have been instructed to refrain from conducting autopsies of dead birds in the field. Instead, they have been advised to send all carcasses to designated Regional Disease Diagnostic Labs to ensure clinical accuracy and containment.

- The DPH has advised everyone to seek immediate medical assistance if they experience flu-like symptoms, including cough, cold, fever, or breathing difficulties

The advisory mandated that dead birds must be either burnt or buried deep to prevent the spread of infection through scavenging.

The authorities have also urged the public to immediately inform the animal husbandry department of any unusual bird deaths to prevent a potential zoonotic spill over to humans. — *PTI*

KIN SUSPECTS FOUL PLAY

DJB panel to probe biker's death in Janakpuri pit

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

The Delhi Jal Board has set up a committee to probe the death of a motorcyclist who allegedly fell into a construction pit dug by the agency, Cabinet Minister Parvesh Verma said.

Verma said the inquiry committee will submit a report by today evening.

A motorcyclist, Kamal, died on Friday morning after allegedly falling into a pit in west Delhi's Janakpuri.

Verma added that the committee will verify compliance with all safety norms, fix responsibility and recommend action. He said he will be visiting the construction site. The victim's family has alleged negligence on the part of the DJB but also suspect foul play. Police received a call regarding the incident around 7 am and when they reached the spot they found the body inside the pit along with the motorcycle.

Kamal, a resident of Kailashpuri, worked at the call centre of a private bank, police said. Preliminary investigation suggests the pit was dug at a DJB construction site and was barricaded.

Meanwhile, the Allahabad HC has ordered the release of Abhay Kumar, the director of MZ Wiztown Planners, after finding out that his arrest in connection with a techie's death in Noida was carried out without following mandatory procedures.

Justices Siddhartha and Upadhyay observed that the police had failed to follow procedure under clause 13 of the arrest memo. — *PTI*

A search and rescue operation is underway after 18 miners were killed and several others got trapped due to an explosion at an illegal coal mining site, in the East Jaintia Hills district of Meghalaya —*PTI*

Meghalaya mine blast: 2 arrested, CM warns of strong action

SHILLONG, 6 FEB

Meghalaya Police have arrested two persons in connection with the blast in an illegal coal mine that claimed 25 lives, as Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma asserted that his government would take stringent action against those responsible.

Director General of Police I Nongrang said that besides the two arrests, a third person has been identified in connection with the incident and investigation is underway.

At least 25 people were killed and eight others injured in an explosion at the illegal mine in the remote Thangsku area in the East Jaintia Hills district on Thursday.

Seven of the eight injured miners have been identified. Four are from Nepal, two from Assam and one is a local, another police officer said, adding they are undergoing treatment at hospitals in Shillong.

The CM has, meanwhile, asked two cabinet ministers to visit the spot, meet officials and take stock of the rescue, relief and law and order situation.

Sangma said the police have been instructed to take strict action against those responsible for the incident and warned that illegal mining would not be tolerated.

Miners are expected to apply for legal mining licences, he said, adding that the option is now available.

The chief minister announced an ex gratia of Rs 3 lakh each from the state government to the next of kin of those who lost their lives in the incident. — *PTI*

Shinde's plaint: Kunal Kamra denies seeking adjournment

MUMBAI, 6 FEB

Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra today denied seeking an adjournment from the Maharashtra Legislative Council's privileges committee regarding his alleged remarks against Deputy CM Eknath Shinde, asserting that the panel itself had deferred the 5 February hearing.

The committee had summoned Kamra and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sushma Andhare for a hearing over their alleged insulting remarks against Shinde.

Committee chairperson and BJP MLC Prasad Lad had earlier said that Kamra and Andhare were initially asked to appear before the panel at 2 pm on 5 February, but the duo expressed their inability to attend, and the hearing was rescheduled for 17 February.

Taking to X, Kamra dismissed media reports claiming that he had sought an adjournment from the privileges committee as "incorrect."

The comedian claimed that he had agreed to appear before the committee and had sent an email on 30 January confirming his attendance with his lawyer.

Kamra said he travelled to Mumbai on Wednesday, but the same evening, he received a call from an officer at the Vidhan Sabha (Bhavan), stating that the hearing has been adjourned.

He said that he has not been informed about the next date for the hearing "(Media reports suggest it 17 February)."

He pointed out that while all communications addressed to him by the committee have stated that the proceedings are "confidential", the notices sent to him appear to have been leaked to the media.

"The chairman of the committee appears to be giving statements to the media about the developments in the proceedings," he said. — *PTI*

Kamra moves HC against Sahyog portal

Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra moved the Bombay High Court against the government's 'Sahyog' portal, calling it an "unconstitutional and unreasonable" assault on freedom of speech, as it allows officials to take down social media content. The comedian, in his petition filed on Wednesday, has challenged IT rules, which were amended in October 2025.

He claimed that these tools "unlawfully" empower the government "to peremptorily issue blocking orders, without following the procedure mandated under the IT Act."

The government said Sahyog is intended to automate sending notices under the IT Act, 2000, to facilitate the removal of data being used to commit an unlawful act. — PTI

Bystanders can't be held for Turkman Gate violence: HC

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

The Delhi High Court on Friday said bystanders cannot be "picked up" for stone pelting during a demolition near the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque in Turkman Gate here.

Justice Prateek Jalan made the oral observation while dealing with a plea for anticipatory bail by a person accused of instigating the crowd. The court asked Delhi Police to file a status report in response to the plea for pre-arrest bail by Sajid Iqbal detailing the specific role played by him along with video evidence. The Delhi Police counsel said the agency was looking into a "deeper conspiracy" in the case and that the accused removed the barricade and instigated the crowd.

Justice Jalan, who was shown a video of the incident, asked the police to bring the video on record with time stamps, stating that even if the petitioner was part of the mob, his role had to be considered.

"If the video shows he is instigating, you are right. If he is simply passing by, you are not right. If you are picking up everyone, that will not be permitted," the court said. — PTI

Actor Maniyanpilla Raju held in hit-and-run

THIRU'PURAM, 6 FEB

Two youths were injured after their motorcycle collided with a car driven by Malayalam film actor Maniyanpilla Raju here, police said today. Raju was arrested and freed on bail.

The injured are Sooraj, 20, and Nidev, 20, both residents of Thiruvananthapuram.

Museum police said the accident occurred at around 9.30 pm on Thursday in front of the Trivandrum Club on the Vellayambalam–Vazhutha kad road.

Police said Raju, after attending an event at Subrahmanium Hall, was entering the Vellayambalam–Vazhutha kad road when his car and the motorcycle collided. However, the actor left without attending to the injured, police said.

The mishap occurred near Trivandrum Club on Thursday —*SCREENGRAB/ANI*

People rushed the duo to a hospital and both suffered multiple fractures, police said.

A case was registered against the driver of the car for rash driving, negligent act endangering life and refusing to attend a person injured in an accident, under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Motor Vehicles Act. The police confirmed that the vehicle was driven by Raju. Raju, who appeared at the Museum police station on Friday morning, told reporters that a motorcycle hit his car. It will be confirmed after CCTV footage is examined.

"I am a cancer patient and have been diagnosed with chikungunya. My wife was alone at home," he said.

Police took Raju to a government hospital, where he underwent a blood test to ascertain whether he was drunk. — *PTI*

GHAZIABAD TRIPLE SUICIDE

Police to find phones sold by father, verify gaming obsession

GHAZIABAD, 6 FEB

Police probing the suicide of three sisters in Ghaziabad have obtained the IMEI numbers of the phones they were using and later sold, and will now trace the devices to retrieve data and verify if the girls were playing any task-based online game, an officer said on Friday.

The girls' father and his wife were questioned for nearly two hours on Thursday as the police recreated the sequence of events.

Nishika, 16, Prachi, 14, and Pakhi, 12, jumped from the ninth floor of their flat in Bharat City Society earlier this week.

Police maintained that the case is being treated as a suicide, and the probe is focused on verifying the father's claims regarding alleged online gaming obsession and examining all related aspects, including family circumstances. Preliminary findings, which include a nine-page t diary recovered from the room of the sisters on Thursday, point to attachment to Korean culture and family discord.

The bodies of the three minor sisters, who died after allegedly jumping off the balcony of their ninth floor home, being shifted after post-mortem examination in Ghaziabad —*PTI*

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Trans-Hindon) Nimish Patil said one mobile phone was purchased by the girls' father, Chetan Kumar, for Nishika about three months ago, and another for Prachi around 15 days ago.

"After noticing their growing obsession with Korean culture, the father sold both phones," police said. Police have not found any evidence confirming the use of a Korean task-based application.

Officials said they are also examining the family's financial dealings. — *PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

'KOREAN GAMES' NOT SOLE REASON FOR DEATHS: AIIMS DOC

A professor of Psychiatry at AIIMS Delhi, Dr Rajesh Sagar, said the girls' suicide must be examined in its totality, stressing that online gaming or so-called "Korean Games" cannot be seen as the only reason. Dr Sagar said psychological, familial and social factors could be involved.

Referring to gaming, which has been cited in initial discussions around the case, the AIIMS expert said it should not be viewed in isolation.

Dr Sagar said that only a small percentage of children develop problematic gaming behaviour and that this is often linked to underlying conditions. Reacting to the writings on the wall of the sisters' room, like "lonely," "I am very very alone," and "Make me a heart of broken", Dr Sagar said these indicate distress.

Explaining the neurological aspect, he highlighted the role of the prefrontal cortex. "The prefrontal cortex which fully develops only at age 25. So children have a tendency to engage in high-risk behaviour," Dr Sagar explained.

READY FOR A KNOCKOUT?

A man manufactures cricket balls at a workshop in Punjab's Jalandhar ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, on Friday —*PTI*

Civic negligence, poor infra claims another life

A dug-up road with an open trench, several malfunctioning street lights, missing safety nets and barricades run along the stretch in Delhi's Janakpuri where a motorcyclist lost his life, eyewitnesses and locals claim, raising concerns over safety lapses, restricted access and poor visibility around a sewage work site.

A motorcyclist died after falling into a 15-foot-deep pit dug for sewage work by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) in west Delhi's Janakpuri area, police said on Friday. The deceased has been identified as Kamal Bhayani, 25; a resident of Kailashpuri, who worked at the call centre of a private bank, police said.

Eyewitnesses, residents and local workers alleged that the trench was dug recently and safety arrangements such as barricades, safety nets and adequate lighting were missing around the site. They added that movement in the area, especially for children and the elderly, had become difficult due to the road being dug up.

Kamal's father, Naresh Chand accused the Delhi Jal Board of negligence. "It is the Delhi Jal Board's and the Administration's mistake. Until a few days ago, there was no pit at the spot."

Kamals' friend condemned the police response, alleging that the urgency of the situation was ignored and that authorities failed to track the exact location of Kamal's mobile phone during the search, which contributed to the fatality. He further questioned how his phone could not be tracked last night.

Residents and workers also pointed to lighting issues along the stretch, saying visibility dropped sharply after dark.

"There are no streetlights for nearly a 100-metre stretch from the traffic signal at the intersection up to the spot where the pit had been dug. Only at the end of this stretch, where a residential lane begins, does a single streetlight stand," said Sandeep, the manager of a local cafe.

The bike of Kamal Bhayani, who plunged into an uncovered pit dug for construction work by Delhi Jal Board and died, being lifted out, at Janakpuri, in New Delhi, on Friday —*PTI*

He added that while barricades were placed near the traffic signal, the recently dug trench remained unsecured. Near the traffic signal, two barricades had been placed as part of the DJB's ongoing sewage work, for which the road has been dug up.

"However, at the site where this particular trench was dug two days ago, there were no barricades or safety nets, not even the standard green mesh fencing," he said.

Uma, a local resident, said the road had been blocked in phases, creating confusion for commuters and two-wheelers attempting to pass through.

"First, they had closed the other side of the road, and now they have shut this one too. Earlier, the stretch ahead was closed, now they've dug up this side. People somehow manage to pass through narrow gaps or by taking detours. But for the past two months, this stretch has been completely blocked, there's no proper passage at all," she said.

She further explained that two-wheelers still tried to pass through, even though dug-up sections lay along the sides.

Reiterating that several streetlights in the area were not functional, she said, "There are no streetlights on this road either. It's completely dark at night on this road. I face a lot of difficultly while crossing the road because I've to go to the temple on the other side."

Riding a bike in the area, especially at night, had become unsafe as potholes and uneven patches were hard to spot. While areas ahead of the accident site had some lighting in the evenings, she said, adding that the stretch near the trench remained pitch dark.

Sharing that construction work had been underway for months but the trench was dug only a day before the incident, another local, Ritu Saluja, said, "This trench was dug up just a day before. The work started from another block and has now reached here. It's supposed to go all the way up to the District Centre. Until yesterday evening, there were no barricades."

She said access in and out of the block had been affected as the dug-up road is the only available route. "It's become very difficult for us to exit from our block. This is the only way in and out of the block. There's no alternate route. I go to drop my grandson at school, but now there's no proper way to reach school. How am I supposed to go?" she questioned.

Another local, Yogendra Saluja, said children were facing difficulty moving through the area due to the ongoing construction and increased traffic.

"There should be some long-term provision for this, because it looks like this project will go on for a year. There were proper barricades on other trenches though," he said.

He added that barricading had been done properly in earlier phases of the project. "The work has shifted here, the traffic has increased a lot. It has become difficult to cross the road. And since the earlier section got completed and the work moved here, the barricading hasn't been done properly, even though this road was opened up," he said.

Alleging a lack of safety measures by the authorities concerned, Sakshi Bansal, Delhi joint secretary of the AAP, said the condition of the Janakpuri–Uttam Nagar stretch had been deteriorating for months.

Despite new streetlights being installed recently, she added that they functioned for barely 10 days before going dark again —PTI

SALAR

People with disabilities get better shot at UPSC

In a significant reform aimed at supporting persons with benchmark disabilities (PwBD), the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has overhauled its examination centre allocation framework.

The Commission has launched a series of technological interventions for the civil services examination-2026 and the Indian Forest Service examination 2026, with a focus on enhancing candidate accessibility and strengthening examination security.

Under the revised mechanism, there will be no capping on examination centre capacity for PwBD candidates. Initially, the existing capacity of each centre will be utilised by both PwBD and non-PwBD candidates.

However, once a centre reaches full capacity, it will no longer be available for selection by non-PwBD candidates, while PwBD candidates will continue to have the option to select the same centre, a statement issued by the UPSC said.

Additional capacity will be created wherever required to ensure that no PwBD candidate is denied their preferred examination centre, it said.

Explaining the rationale behind the move, UPSC chairman Ajay Kumar said, "An analysis of examination centre data over the past five years revealed that certain centres - including Delhi, Cuttack, Patna, and Lucknow - reach capacity at a very early stage due to high application volumes, creating difficulties for PwBD candidates."

"With the revised mechanism, every PwBD candidate will be assured of their preferred examination centre, ensuring greater ease and convenience while appearing for UPSC examinations," he said.

Kumar said that the Commission has adopted the use of the latest technology to ensure a free, fair, inclusive, and accessible examination process, with a strong focus on enhancing candidate convenience and ease of participation, while ensuring that selections are made strictly on the basis of merit.

As part of its ongoing efforts to improve efficiency, transparency and candidate convenience, the UPSC has introduced a revamped Online Application Portal for the submission of applications and conduct of examinations.

The redesigned portal aims to reinforce integrity across various stages of the examination process while simplifying the application experience for candidates, the statement said.

The Commission had on Wednesday issued a notification for the civil services examination. As many as 933 vacancies, including 33 posts reserved for PwBD candidates, will be filled through the test.

The civil services exam is conducted annually by the UPSC in three stages -- preliminary, main and interview -- to select officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) among others.

This year's prelims is scheduled to be held on 24 May.

The Commission has also expanded its network of examination centres to reduce pressure on high-demand locations.

Meerut has been added to decongest Delhi-NCR, Kanpur to ease pressure around Lucknow, and Bhubaneswar to supplement centres near Cuttack, the UPSC said.

These three centres have been added for the preliminary examination, increasing the total number of prelims centres from 80 to 83.

For the main examination, the number of centres has been increased from 24 to 27, with the addition of Bhubaneswar, Srinagar, and Imphal.

Further strengthening its centre planning process, the revamped application portal now includes a new feature related to examination centre preferences, the statement said.

In addition to selecting from notified examination centres, candidates will be asked to indicate preferred nearby cities through a dropdown list.

This data will serve as a survey of candidate preferences and may be used to identify locations for the creation of new examination centres, where feasible.

The portal also incorporates a technology-enabled measure of photo verification and face recognition to enhance the overall integrity of the examination process. This intervention strengthens identity verification across various stages of examination, contributing to a more robust and transparent system, it said.

These initiatives form part of UPSC's centenary year celebrations and reflect the Commission's continued efforts to evolve its processes in line with contemporary requirements, while upholding the highest standards of fairness, transparency, and integrity. —*PTI*

Persons with benchmark disabilities can now choose which exam centres to write in, as the UPC introduced a revamped Online Application Portal —*REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Citizens urge HC to take action of Assam CM's 'miya' remarks

At least 40 leading citizens, including academics, doctors, authors and retired bureaucrats, have urged the Gauhati High Court to take suo motu cognisance of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's recent statements against the Muslim community.

They maintained that "silence or inaction against constitutional transgressions" could lead to eroding the "moral authority of the Constitution itself".

In a letter to Chief Justice Ashutosh Kumar on Thursday, the citizens drew the High Court's attention to a series of public statements by Sarma, "which, on the face, amount to hate speech, executive intimidation and open vilification of a particular community", referring to the CM's remarks against 'Miyas' (Bengali-speaking Muslims).

They maintained that the Bengali-speaking Muslims have become a "part of the larger Assamese society" over the course of more than 100 years, and Sarma's statements "enter the prohibited constitutional zone of dehumanisation, collective stigmatisation and threats of state-sponsored harassment".

'Miya' is originally a pejorative term used for Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam and the non-Bengali speaking people generally identify them as Bangladeshi immigrants. In recent years, activists from the community have started adopting this term as a gesture of defiance.

Among other claims, Sarma has asked people to pay Rs 1 less to "miya" auto drivers than what the auto fare was. Following the Chief Minister's remark, many youth in the state began posting photos on social media purporting to show that they had paid less than the metre charge.

The citizens claimed that Sarma has indulged in "instigation for physical harm, economic discrimination and social humiliation", specifically referring to his statement urging the people to pay less than the actual fare for rickshaws pulled by Bengali-speaking Muslims.

Among the 43 signatories are academician and intellectual Hiren Gohain, ex-DGP Harekrishna Deka, former archbishop of Guwahati, Thomas Menamparampil, Rajya Sabha MP Ajit Bhuyan, environmental scientist Dulal Chandra Goswami, retired principal of Assam Medical College T R Borbora, advocate Santanu Borthakur, joint convenor of Joint Council of Trade Unions Garga Talukdar, and litterateur Arupa Patangia Kalita.

They also pointed to the CM's statements of ordering BJP workers to file objections targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims during the ongoing Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls.

The citizens claimed that Gauhati High Court had sufficient grounds to take suo motu cognisance of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's remarks —*x*

"A constitutionally mandated and quasi-judicial process such as the SR cannot be converted into a partisan or communal exercise at the behest of the chief minister," the letter said, noting that the Election Commission has not yet taken cognisance of the matter.

Stating that a Chief Minister swears an oath to discharge duties without affection or ill will, the letter said, "Publicly singling out a religious community for suffering, economic deprivation, heightened scrutiny and exclusion is fundamentally incompatible with this oath."

"The brazen hate speech of the Assam Chief Minister is prejudicial to national integration and directly promotes enmity between different groups on grounds of religion," it further said.

They also said that Sarma's statements are contrary to secularism, which forms the basic structure of the Constitution.

Maintaining that it is a fit case for the court to exercise its suo moto jurisdiction, they urged the Chief Justice to "direct competent authorities to register a case against hate speech, executive interference and violations of fundamental rights".

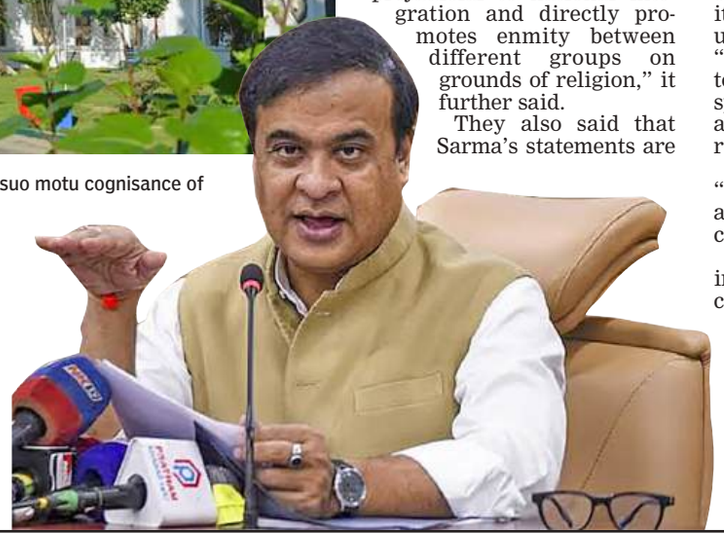
They called upon the court to "protect the dignity, equality and security of the affected community".

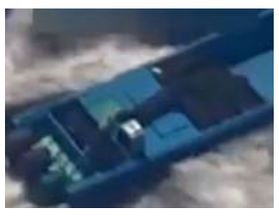
They also urged the court's intervention to "uphold public confidence in secular constitutional governance and the rule of law".

"Silence or inaction in the face of such open constitutional transgressions risks normalising them and eroding the moral authority of the Constitution itself," the letter added. —*PTI*

What does 'miya' mean?

'Miya' is originally a pejorative term used against Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam, and the non-Bengali speaking people generally identify them as Bangladeshi immigrants. However, community activists have begun "reclaiming" the term as a gesture of defiance and using it to refer to one another. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has used that as a justification for using the term. Muslims account for at least 33 per cent of Assam's population.





-SCREENGRAB

US strikes alleged drug boat in Pacific

WASHINGTON, 6 FEB

The US military said on Thursday it carried out another strike on a vessel in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing two people. US Southern Command said the boat was travelling along known narco-trafficking routes and was engaged in narcotics operations. Footage shared online showed the vessel exploding in flames. The strike came hours after US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth claimed that some top cartel traffickers had halted drug operations following recent US attacks, though he provided no evidence. Neither the Pentagon nor Southern Command responded to questions about the claim. Thursday's strike brings the death toll from US attacks on suspected drug boats under the Trump administration to 128. —*PTI*

Indian-Origin man jailed for online Singapore scam

SINGAPORE, 6 FEB

An Indian-origin man in Singapore has been jailed for 23 months for cheating a woman of more than SGD268,000 after befriending her online. Thevendran Elan Goven, 31, pleaded guilty to one count of cheating, with two similar charges considered. The court heard he first contacted the 25-year-old victim in July 2021, through a Carousell listing for a PlayStation 4, which was never delivered. He later built a personal relationship with her and repeatedly borrowed money, citing legal fees, medical bills and a sick pet. Between August and December 2021, he cheated her 48 times, using the money for personal expenses and gambling debts. District Judge Janet Wang noted the severe financial and psychological harm caused. —*PTI*

SL SC clears Bill to scrap pension benefits to MPs

COLOMBO, 6 FEB

The Supreme Court of Sri Lanka has ruled that the Parliamentary Pensions (Repeal) Bill can be passed in Parliament with a majority. The ruling followed hearings on five fundamental rights petitions challenging the bill's constitutionality. The court proceedings began on 22 January, after the bill was tabled on 7 January. The bill seeks to repeal the Parliamentary Pensions Law of 1977, which grants non-contributory lifetime pensions to former MPs. Te court held that the 1977 law was not derived from the Constitution. The repeal is a key reform pledge of the ruling National People's Power government, which plans to redirect savings to public services. —*PTI*

4 killed in Philippines storm, 6,000 displaced

CAGAYAN DE ORO, 6 FEB

A tropical storm triggered flooding and a landslide in the Philippines, killing at least four people, displacing more than 6,000 people, officials announced on Friday. Tropical Storm Penha made landfall late Thursday in Surigao del Sur and was tracked on Friday off Bohol with sustained winds of 55 kilometres per hour and gusts of 70kph. A couple and two children died when their shanty was hit by a rain-triggered landslide in a quarry village in Cagayan de Oro, Office of Civil Defence said. In Iligan City, a resident pleaded on radio to be rescued from her second floor as floodwaters rose. "Rescuers are on the way," Sugarol said. More than 5,800 evacuees moved to centres, classes were suspended, nearly 5,000 port workers and passengers were stranded, and Penha was expected to weaken.—*PTI*

Iran, US hold nuclear talks amid escalation

Iran called the talks 'a good start' as both sides agreed to hold further discussions

MUSCAT, 6 FEB

Iran and the United States held indirect talks in Oman over Tehran's nuclear program on Friday, months after America bombed Iran's uranium enrichment sites and just weeks after nationwide protests across the Islamic Republic.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called the talks "a very good start," as the parties met Oman's top diplomat separately at a palace outside Muscat.

On the US side, represented by US envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, had no immediate comment on the talks.

Araghchi and Omani officials characterised the talks as merely an effort to resume future negotiations—effectively resetting the nuclear dialogue to where it stood a year ago, prior to Israel's 12 day war on Iran in June.

"We will hold consultations with our capitals regarding the next steps, and the results will be conveyed to Oman foreign minister," Araghchi said.

Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi (in white) meets his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi, US special envoy Steve Witkoff and POTUS's son-in-law Jared Kushner—*VCG*

Internal documents reportedly obtained by Al Jazeera suggest a framework proposed by Egypt, Turkiye, and Qatar that would require Iran to halt enrichment for three years, after which they are to limit it to on 1.5 per cent, export its highly enriched uranium, and pledge a moratorium on initiating ballistic missile strikes.

While Russia has reportedly signalled a willingness to accept the exported uranium, Tehran has previously dismissed shipping out its stockpile as a "nonstarter.

"The mistrust that has developed is a serious challenge facing the negotiations," Araghchi said.

"We must first address this issue, and then enter into the next level of negotiations." Araghchi said.

Russia had signalled it would take the uranium, but Iran has said ending the program or shipping out the uranium were nonstarters.

Meanwhile, Gulf Arab states fear an attack could trigger a wider regional war after recent incidents involving Iranian drones and shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, while US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington would test whether a deal with Tehran could possibly be successful. —*PTI*

Leave Iran now: US warns its citizens

The US Embassy in Iran has urged its citizens to leave the country, warning of planned nuclear talks in Oman. The US said Iranian authorities are restricting internet and cell services, closing roads, transport disruptions and heightened security. The embassy advised citizens to expect continued outages, consider alternative communications, and, if safe, depart via Armenia or Turkiye, cautioning that flights may be cancelled without notice and to not rely on US government assistance.

Locals gather at the site after a suicide bomber blew himself up at a mosque during Friday prayers, in Islamabad, Pakistan —*PTI*

Suicide bomber kills 31, injures 169 in Pak mosque

ISLAMABAD, 6 FEB

A suicide bomber blew himself up at a Shia mosque during Friday prayers in Pakistan's capital, killing at least 31 people and injuring 169 , in one of the worst terror attacks targeting the community in recent years.

A suicide bomber targeted a Shia mosque during Friday prayers in Pakistan's capital, killing at least 31 people and wounding 169 others, according to government officials.

Described as one of the worst terror attacks in recent years, the attack came during a visit by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who arrived in Pakistan on Thursday for a two-day state visit. , the incident occurred at the Khadijatul Kubra mosque-cum-imambargah in Islamabad's Tarlai area, police said.

Citing eyewitnesses, Geo News reported that the attacker first opened fire and then detonated himself. Police and witnesses said the suicide bomber was stopped at the gate of the imambargah before setting off the explosion.

Police and Rescue launched rescue operations as army troops and Rangers cordoned off the area, while hospitals in the capital declared an emergency to treat the injured.

According to police officials, the nature of the explosion was being probed, but the explosion seems to be a suicide attack.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the blast. However, police sources said that the attacker was a foreign national and had links with Fitna al Khwaraji, a term used for Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

The attack comes less than three months after a suicide bomber killed 12 people in a blast outside a district and sessions court building in Islamabad. —*PTI*

Russian General shot in Moscow

WASHINGTON/ MOSCOW, 6 FEB

A deputy chief of Russian military intelligence was shot and wounded in Moscow on Friday, following a series of assassinations of senior military officers that Russia blamed on Ukraine.

Lt. Gen. Vladimir Alekseyev was shot several times at an apartment building in Moscow's northwest and hospitalised.The shooting came a day after Russian, Ukrainian and US negotiators wrapped up two days of talks in Abu Dhabi aimed at ending the nearly four-year conflict in Ukraine. The Russian delegation was led by the military intelligence chief, Adm. Igor Kostyukov.

START DEAL

US President Donald Trump has rejected Russian President Vladimir Putin's proposal to voluntarily extend limits onnuclear weapons after the expiration of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START).

Trump called it "a badly negotiated deal" The New START treaty, signed in 2010 by then US president Barack Obama, capped deployed strategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems, but its expiration has lifted those limits, raising fears of a renewed arms race.

—*PTI*

AHEAD OF ELECTION POLLS

Over 50 injured in B'desh protest

DHAKA, 6 FEB

At least 50 activists of the ultra-right Inqilab Mancha were injured on Friday in a clash with police in Bangladesh when they tried to defy a ban during a protest demanding immediate justice over the killing of their leader, Sharif Osman Hadi, last year.

Just six days before Bangladesh's national elections on February 12, civil unrest escalated as thousands of Inquilab Morcha protesters attempted to storm the official Jamuna residence of Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus.

Witnesses said police in riot gear turned tough as the protesters tried to break through security barricades in front of Jamuna from a nearby sit-in demonstration, defying the earlier announced ban on rallies adjacent to Jamuna.

Hadi, a front-line activist in the violent 2024 student-led street protests known as the July Uprising that toppled then prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government, was also a candidate in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Protests demanded justice for Hadi, who was shot in the Paltan area on 12 December and later died in Singapore. His death sparked nationwide violence, including attacks on media outlets, political and cultural sites, and diplomatic missions.

Violent clashes between police and government employees in Jamuna on Friday —*SCREENGRAB*

According to doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, 23 people—including Inqilab Mancha secretary-general Abdullah Al Zaber—received treatment following the unrest, but the government confirmed that none of them had suffered bullet wounds.

The International Crisis Group has warned of uncertainty surrounding the polls,the first since Sheikh Hasina's ouster in 2024,citing concerns over credibility and the risk of violence, as protest leaders allege unnamed political forces are seeking to delay

US TO PROTECT DIEGO GARCIA BASE: TRUMP

WASHINGTON, 6 FEB

US President Donald Trump has stated he retains the right reinforce American military presence on Diego Garcia, following discussions with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Trump described Diego Garcia as crucial to US national security due to its central position in the Indian Ocean and its strategic military role. He emphasised that the US will never allow its presence at the base to be undermined.

He explained that the UK-Mauritius Treaty, signed in 2025, grants Mauritius full sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, with the UK retaining rights to Diego Garcia for 99 years. Trump warned that if the lease falls apart or US operations are threatened, he would take decisive action to secure the base. He also criticised claims undermining US presence and called the base "of great importance" to national security. Earlier, Trump condemned the UK's plan to give away Diego Garcia as "great stupidity" and urged Greenland's acquisition for strategic reasons.

ARGENTINA OPENS AGRI SECTOR TO US

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Argentina's foreign minister Pablo Quirno on Thursday signed the US-Argentina Agreement on Reciprocal Trade and Investment. The agreement is designed to cut tariff barriers. Argentina also agreed to recognise US safety and regulatory standards for imports and to accept USDA food safety .The deal prohibits Argentina from levying customs duties on cross-border data flows and forgo a digital services tax targeting US technology firms.—*PTI*

Epstein helped Woody Allen visit WH

NEW YORK, 6 FEB

In 2015, American filmmaker Woody Allen and his wife, Soon-Yi Previn, toured the White House during a visit to Washington, with assistance from their friend and neighbour Jeffrey Epstein. While Allen's ties to Epstein have been known for years, newly released Justice Department records shed light on their depth relationship.

The filmmaker, his wife and Epstein were neighbours in New York City, and the three dined together often. They offered each other support when they were being criticised in the media. They commiserated about being accused of sexual misconduct.

Allen and his wife, Soon-Yi Previn —*SCREENGRAB*

Epstein killed himself in 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges.

Meanwhile, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said on Tuesday that Warsaw would launch an investigation into what it said were possible links between Epstein and Russia's intelligence services and into any potential impact on Poland.

However, the Kremlin said on Thursday it did not want to waste time answering questions about unproven suggestions in Western media and by Poland's premier that late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein may have been some sort of Russian intelligence asset. —*PTI*

SIX MILLION DOLLARS

US announces aid for Cuba amid energy crisis

SANTA CRUZ DEL NORTE/ SAN JUAN/ HAVANA, 6 FEB

The US on Thursday announced an additional USD 6 million in aid for Cuba amid worsening crises and rising tensions, which Cuba's President called an "energy blockade."

The communist nation faces an acute energy crisis, with no diesel or oil production for weeks and reliance on dwindling Venezuelan shipments halted since December.

Cuba has suffered months of power outages due to ageing infrastructure and acute fuel shortages that have left generation far below demand, forcing many to cook with coal and firewood.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel amid an energy crisis —*SCREENGRAB*

The crisis has worsened after the US moved to block Venezuelan oil shipments and President Donald Trump threatened tariffs on countries supplying oil to Cuba, further tightening fuel access and deepening energy shortages across the island.

US President Donald Trump has claimed talks are underway with Havana — a claim denied by Cuban officials — while warning Cuba to "make a deal" before it is "too late," vowing to block its oil access by targeting Venezuelan supplies after last month's US-led ouster of its leader and threatening tariffs on countries that support the island.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel on Thursday called the situation "complex," accusing the United States of pursuing an "aggressive and criminal" policy.

Miguel said that the policy is disrupting transportation, hospitals, schools, tourism and food production, while stressing that Havana remains open to dialogue with Washington but will not negotiate under pressure as fuel shortages and tensions continue to escalate.

—*Agencies*

T'land to vote on 8 Feb, clear mandate unlikely

BANGKOK, 6 FEB

Thailand's political parties on Friday geared up for their last campaign rallies before voters head to the polls on Sunday for a general election being held against a backdrop of economic slowdown and heightened nationalist sentiment.

There also have been accusations of shady financial influence linked to cybercrime and rampant corruption among officials ahead of the election that is likely to be a tight race among three major parties with no outright winner expected.

The snap vote was triggered in December by Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who dissolved parliament to preempt a potential no-confidence motion over an issue of constitutional change. It came as Thailand combated with Cambodia over a long pending border issue.

Faced with declining popularity in the wake of floods and scams involving senior officials, Anutin's conservative Bhumjaithai Party seeks to return to power focusing on national security and economic stimulus.

The progressive People's Party, led by Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut, may win most of seats but find it difficult to find a coalition partner due to its reform agenda which includes shaking up the mighty military, analysts say.

A referendum also will be held asking voters whether Thailand should replace its 2017 military-drafted constitution. —*PTI*

—PIXABAY

Silver, gold extend losses amid profit booking

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

Silver dropping nearly 5 per cent to Rs 2.55 lakh per kg on Friday, while gold slipped to Rs 1.57 lakh per 10 grams as investors kept booking profits for the second straight day. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal plunged Rs 13,000, or 4.85 per cent. Similarly gold of 99.9 per cent purity fell Rs 3,400, or 2.12 per cent, to Rs 1,57,200 per 10 grams. The decline in domestic prices was mainly driven by profit-taking at elevated levels even as global precious metal rates staged a rebound later in the day. In the international markets, spot silver gained USD 3.02, or 4.26 per cent, to USD 74 per ounce, whileold rose USD 106.74, or 2.23 per cent, to USD 4,887.30 per ounce. Bullion prices recovered sharply by over 4 per cent after a plunge. —PTI

Air India opens Maharaja Lounge at Delhi airport

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

Air India (AI) on Thursday opened a new premium lounge at Delhi airport, as CEO Campbell Wilson said 2026 would be when changes become clearly visible both in the air and on the ground. Spread across 16,000 square feet, the Maharaja Lounge can accommodate around 300 Business and First Class passengers. Calling it an "exciting time" for the Tata Group-owned airline, Wilson said, "over half of AI's widebody fleet would be upgraded to new standards by the end of this year, with the remaining in coming years. We will increasingly deliver a world-class experience". AI also plans to open lounges in cities such as San Francisco, New York as part of its global expansion-plans. —PTI

BEML Q3 losses stand at Rs 22.38 crore

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

State-owned BEML Ltd on Friday reported a consolidated loss of Rs 22.38 crore for the quarter ended 31 December, 2025, hurt by a sharp rise in expenses. The public sector undertaking had posted a consolidated profit of Rs 24.41 crore in the corresponding quarter last year. Despite the loss, BEML's consolidated income rose to Rs 1,087.13 crore during the December quarter, up from Rs 880.28 crore a year earlier, according to the BSE data. Total expenses, however, climbed faster to Rs 1,112.54 crore, compared with Rs 850.70 crore in the year-ago period, eroding profitability. BEML operates across three key verticals, mining and construction equipment, defence, and rail and metro.—PTI

Crude oil futures rise over 1% on firm demand

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

Crude oil futures rose over 1 per cent in domestic trade on Friday, supported by firm spot demand and positive global cues. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude oil for February delivery gained Rs 75, or 1.31 per cent, to Rs 5,821/barrel, while the March contract climbed Rs 88, or 1.53 per cent, to Rs 5,825/barrel. Traders attributed the uptick to a steady demand outlook, which kept sentiment positive in the domestic market. Globally, West Texas Intermediate crude for March was trading 1.17 per cent higher at USD 64.03/barrel, while Brent crude rose 1.02 per cent to USD 68.24/barrel. However, uncertainty persists amid stalled Russia-Ukraine peace talks and unclear progress in US-Iran negotiations. —PTI

Digital fraud victims to get up to Rs 25K

The RBI will recommend measures to enhance safety of digital payments for customers

MUMBAI, 6 FEB

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Friday announced a new framework to compensate customers up to an amount of Rs 25,000 for loss incurred in small-value fraudulent transactions.

Announcing the last bi-monthly policy for the current financial year, Malhotra said, "we will also publish a discussion paper on possible measures to enhance the safety of digital payments. Such measures may include lagged credits and additional authentication for specific class of users like senior citizens."

RBI will issue three draft guidelines related to mis-selling, recovery of loans and engagement of recovery agents and limiting liability of customers in un-authorised electronic banking transactions.

The draft revised instructions, including a framework for compensation, would be issued shortly for public consultation.

Observing that misselling financial products and services by any regulated entities has significant consequences for both customers and on such entities, Malhotra said, there is a need to ensure that third party products and services that are being sold at the bank counters are suitable to customer needs and are commensurate with the risk appetite of individual clients.

All the extant conduct related instructions on engagement of recovery agents and other aspects related to recovery of loans will be reviewed and harmonised.

Announcing Mission Saksham (Sahakari Bank Kshamta Nirman), the RBI Governor said it is focussed on capacity building for Urban Cooperative Banks.

Stressing that the Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks are vital institutions for promoting financial inclusion and serving the unbanked, he said, securing their next phase of growth would depend on developing stronger skills and competencies, along with technical capabilities and operational resilience in them.

The capacity building of the sector will be implemented through a large number of physical training programmes as well as a scalable learning platform, to cover about 1.40 lakh participants, across functions, he said. —PTI

RBI will issue three draft guidelines related to mis-selling, loan recovery and limiting of customers' liability in digital banking transactions —PTI

RBI predicts high prices for costly metals

The Reserve Bank on Friday revised upwards inflation projection for the current fiscal year to 2.1 per cent and for first and second quarters of the next financial year, with increase in prices of precious metals. It projected the consumer price index (CPI)-based inflation for first and second quarters of 2026-27 and 4 per cent and 4.2 per cent, respectively. The revised outlook for CPI inflation is benign.—PTI

REITs to get bank funding

MUMBAI, 6 FEB

The Reserve Bank of India on Friday proposed to allow banks to lend to Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) to deepen the financing pool for the real estate sector.

REITs are investment vehicles that own or operate income-generating real estate, enabling investors to earn a share of the income produced without directly purchasing properties.

REITs and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) were conceptualised in India to free up banks' funds in completed and operational real estate and infrastructure projects by refinancing such exposures with pooled funds of institutions and retail investors.

Consistent with these objectives, commercial banks were not permitted, ab initio, to lend to these entities, the Reserve Bank said. While bank lending to InvITs was allowed subsequently, lending to REITs was not permitted.

RBI's 'Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies' said it is proposed to permit commercial banks to extend finance to REITs after review and considering the presence of a strong regulatory and governance framework for listed REITs.

The existing guidelines in respect of lending to InvITs are also being harmonised for parity with prudential safeguards proposed for lending to REITs. RBI announced measures for development of corporate bond market. An active derivatives market can facilitate efficient management of credit risks. —PTI

RBI raises FY27 Q1, Q2 growth forecast

The Reserve Bank of India on Friday revised upwards GDP growth forecast for the first quarter of the next fiscal year to 6.9 per cent and 7 per cent for the subsequent three months on the back of trade deals, GST rationalisation, and robust farm output. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the economic activity is expected to hold up well in 2026-27, with high capacity utilisation, accelerating bank credit and conducive financial conditions boosting investment. —PTI

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

The government has extended the deadline for submitting bids for India's largest oil and gas acreage offering for a fourth time, granting potential investors an additional three months, the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons said.

"Bid submission closing date for OALP Bid Round X (has been) extended till 29 May, 2026," DGH said on its website.

While it did not give any reason for the extension, industry sources said this may have been done to give potential investors time to study the new liberalised rules framed following passage of the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill.

The 10th round of Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP-X) was originally scheduled to close at the end of July.

In late July, the deadline was extended to 31 October and again to 31 December, 2025.

OALP-X bid deadline was then extended till 18 February, 2026.

Under OALP-X, 25 blocks with a total area of about 191,986 square kilometres have been offered to bidders for finding and producing oil and gas.The acreage on offer comprises six onshore blocks, six shallow-water tracts, one deepwater block and 12 located in ultra-deepwater across 13 sedimentary basin. —PTI

Rupee falls by 36P amid geopolitical tensions

MUMBAI, 6 FEB

The rupee declined 36 paise to settle at 90.70 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, weighed down by geopolitical uncertainty over the US-Iran talks, and a sharp rise in global crude oil prices.

The currency gained in the first half of the session after the Reserve Bank announced a status quo on key lending rates; however, sustained foreign fund outflows pressured the local unit, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.28 against the greenback and oscillated between the high of 90.18 and the low of 90.83 during the session.

On Thursday, the rupee appreciated 13 paise to close at 90.34 against the US dollar.

"The rupee rose as the Reserve Bank of India left the repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent, in line with expectations. However, it lost initial gains amid geopolitical uncertainty over US-Iran talks," Anuj Choudhary, a research analyst said. —PTI

Sensex, Nifty fall after RBI pauses rate cuts

MUMBAI, 6 FEB

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty continued to trade lower on Friday after the RBI decided to pause on the policy rate front amid geopolitical uncertainities.

Fresh foreign fund outflows also dented investors' sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex further edged lower by 368.37 points to 82,945.56 in morning trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 146.7 points to 25,496.10.

The RBI had initiated a 25 basis point rate cut in December.

Announcing the sixth and final bi-monthly monetary policy for the current fiscal year, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has decided to retain short-term lending rate or repo rate at 5.25 per cent with a neutral stance.

From the Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Trent, State Bank of India, Bharat Electronics, Tata Steel, Asian Paints and Infosys were among the major laggards.

ITC, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Power Grid were among the gainers.

US markets ended lower on Thursday.

The ongoing correction in global technology names reflects a combination of stretched valuations, rising AI-related cost concerns, and muted investor response to recent big-tech earnings and outlooks, he added.

Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 2,150.51 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, climbed 0.44 per cent to USD 67.92 per barrel.

On Thursday, the Sensex dropped 503.76 points and Nifty declined 133.20 points amid tense geopolitics. —PTI

'India-EU FTA to boost market access for auto component firms'

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

The India-EU deal is expected to reshape competitive dynamics and market access on both sides while providing better access to European markets for Indian auto and component exports, aiding the sector's long-term growth prospects, an Icra report has stated.

It is expected to give a boost to premium vehicle imports, but have limited disruption to the mass market, it added.

The sharp reduction in duties on EU-made vehicles is expected to drop from as high as 110 per cent to 10 per cent over time for a fixed quota/annum, above an import price of Euro 15,000/

vehicle, the report said, adding that this will open India's car market to European original equipment manufacturers (OEMs).

"Lower tariffs are expected to improve access for European brands like BMW, Mercedes, Audi, and Porsche, enabling competitive pricing and new growth opportunities in India's fast-expanding auto market," the report pointed out.

The EU remains one of the world's largest automotive production hubs, and improved trade may support higher export volumes from specialised component manufacturers and firms, thus strengthening India's role in the global supply chain, Icra stated. Auto components account for 3 percent of the exports to EU. —PTI

Amid low profits, Toyota assigns CFO as new CEO

TOKYO, 6 FEB

Japan's top automaker Toyota reported a 43 per cent drop in quarterly profit Friday, and announced Chief Financial Officer Kenta Kon will become its new chief executive and president.

Kon, a Toyota veteran, replaces Koji Sato in both roles in April. Shareholders' approval is expected in June.

Kon, who has hands-on experience in various fields, including automated driving, was tapped as an expert on ways to improve company earnings, according to Toyota.

All the Japanese automakers have been struggling because of rising material costs and the impact of US President Donald Trump's tariffs.

Kon, considered close to company chairman Akio Toyoda, the founder's grandson, said people at Toyota were responsible, but they also tended to be reluctant to change because they had worked hard at setting up the system, when they need to be more nimble.

For the nine months through December, Toyota reported a 26 per cent decline in profit at 3.03 trillion yen (USD 19 billion) from 4.1 trillion yen. —PTI

IIT-Madras, Unicorn launch Rs 600 cr deep tech fund

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

IIT Madras Research Park (IITMRP) and Unicorn India Ventures (UIV) on Friday announced the launch of a Rs 600-crore deep tech fund aimed at supporting early-stage startups in strategic sector.

The fund, 'IITM Unicorn Frontier Fund I' also includes a greenshoe option of an additional Rs 400 crore.

The fund will focus on IP-led, engineering-heavy startups that align with national strategic interests.

It aims to invest in over 25 companies with an average first cheque size of Rs 8-10 crore. The investment strategy follows a dual-stage approach, primarily targeting startups at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 3–4, while also supporting those at more advanced stages (TRL 5-9) to accelerate market penetration.

"India's deep-tech ecosystem is at a pivotal moment, driven by supportive policies, sustained R&D investments, and a strong entrepreneurial aspiration among our youth. This fund will accelerate the scale-up of mission-driven, globally competitive startups while strengthening India's culture of innovation and entrepreneurship," Natarajan Malupillai, group CEO of IITM Research Park, said.

The fund is being positioneas "patient capital" with a tenure of 10+2 years. To ensure portfolio companies are not capital-starved, 60 per cent of the investable corpus will be deployed for initial investments, while 40 per cent will be reserved for follow-on rounds to support companies through the "Valley of Death" phase. Unicorn has a portfolio of 30 companies. —PTI

REPO RATES UNCHANGED

Economists back RBI's stance, says it reflects growth confidence

MUMBAI, 6 FEB

Leading economists have welcomed the Reserve Bank of India's decision to keep the policy repo rate unchanged while maintaining a neutral stance, saying the move reflects prudence amid firm growth.

Dipti Deshpande, principal economist at Crisil, said the Monetary Policy Committee's (MPC) decision was in line with expectations and underscored a cautious wait-and-watch approach. The MPC is factoring in a likely rise in inflation in the first half of the next fiscal year even as growth remains strong. Upcoming revisions to the consumer price index (CPI) and gross domestic product (GDP)

series, following changes in methodology and base year, also warrant caution.

Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at Bank of Baroda, said the unchanged repo rate left markets largely unmoved, as the decision was widely anticipated. He noted that the RBI refrained from providing GDP and inflation forecasts for the next year, given that the new CPI and GDP series are expected later this month.

Radhika Rao, executive director and senior economist at DBS Bank, said the decision to hold rates was anchored in the MPC's favourable assessment of growth and inflation conditions, ahead of the data series overhaul.

Rajani Sinha, chief economist at CareEdge Ratings, said the February policy outcome was in line with expectations. She pointed out that the MPC revised up its average growth projection for the first half of FY27 by 20 basis points to 7 per cent, while raising CPI inflation projections for FY26 and the first half of FY27 by 10 basis points each.

On liquidity, Sinha said the RBI reiterated its commitment to maintaining comfortable conditions. —ANI

India's imports from China fell in key sectors: Govt

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

India's imports from China have declined in multiple sectors such as fertilisers, chemicals, iron and steel and man-made yarn in 2024-25.

Informing this in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha on Friday, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada said mobile phone imports have decreased from Rs 48,609 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 3,710 crore in 2024-25.

On the other hand, the export of mobile phones has increased from Rs 1,566 crore in 2014-15 to more than Rs 2,05,017 crore in 2024-25.

"In 2024-25, a decline in imports from China was observed across several sectors compared to the previous year.

For example, imports fell sharply in fertilisers (61.4 per cent), followed by residual chemicals and allied products (19.7 per cent), iron and steel (10.3 per cent), and man-made yarn (9.5 per cent)," he said.

The government encourages Indian business to diversify their supply chains to reduce dependency on single sources of supply. It also closely monitors the surge in imports. —PTI

-PTI

Josh Hazlewood ruled out of T20 World Cup 2026

MELBOURNE, 6 FEB

In a major setback to an already depleted Australia, their premier pacer Josh Hazlewood was on Friday ruled out of the T20 World Cup after "running out of time" to recover from a hamstring injury. Australia would not be naming any replacement for the 35-year-old bowler. It was earlier stated by Cricket Australia that Hazlewood would be able to join the squad during the middle and later stages of the tournament, beginning Saturday, and would be played at venues across India and Sri Lanka. "We were hopeful Josh would be back to match fitness by the Super 8 stage, but the latest indications he is still some time away and accelerating his program will carry too much risk," selector Tony Dodemaide said.—*PTI*

-PTI

Kochhar top Indian after two rounds in Manila

MANILA, 6 FEB

Indian golfer Karandeep Kochhar shot a fine 69 in the second round to be Tied-13th at the halfway stage of the Philippine Golf Championship here on Friday. Kochhar, who opened with a modest 74, had five birdies against two bogeys in the second round as four of the five Indians in the field made the cut. The others who ensured weekend action were Shaurya Bhattacharya, who shot 71-74 and was T-31, while Shubham Jaglan (77-70) was T-53 and Ajeetesh Sandhu (72-75) was also T-53. Rashid Khan (75-74) missed the cut, which fell at four over. Korea's Jeunghun Wang shot two-under-par 70 and was tied for the lead with compatriot Wooyoung Cho (70), Thailand's Sarut Vongchaisit (71), and Australian Travis. —*PTI*

Jhared makes dream debut on DP World PGTI

NAYA RAIPUR, 6 FEB

Jhared Hack of the USA made a dream debut on the DP World PGTI with a thumping five-shot victory at the season-opening Chhattisgarh Open, a Rs 1.5 crore event, here on Friday. Jhared (63-61-63-59), who was overnight third and one shot off the lead, produced a sensational final round of 10-under 59, the lowest single-round score ever registered at the Fairway Golf & Lake Resort. Las Vegas-based Jhared, runner-up at last week's DP World PGTI Qualifying School, improved upon the previous best score of 60 at Naya Raipur, shot by multiple players at last year's edition.—*PTI*

Asian C'ship: Rudrankksh takes air rifle gold

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

Former world champion shooter Rudrankksh Patil offered a glimpse of what lies ahead this season by clinching the gold medal, while Olympian Arjun Babuta finished second, as India made a telling statement in the men's 10m air rifle event at the Asian Championship here Friday. Rudrankksh, one of the finest rifle marksmen to emerge from the country after Olympic gold medallist Abhinav Bindra and Gagan Narang, shot a superb 251.9 in the final to hold off the challenge from compatriot Babuta (250.7) and stamp his authority on the sport, as the duo, along with Vishal Singh.—*PTI*

Under-19 India players celebrate the victory with the cup, beating England on Friday World Cup. India's record-extending sixth U19 World Cup title in Harare. -PTI

Suryavanshi storm leads India to world record triumph

India beats England by 100 runs in final

HARARE, 6 FEB

Cricket's latest wunderkind, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, played arguably the most breathtaking knock in the history of the U-19 World Cup to fire India to a record-extending sixth title with a 100-run drubbing of England in the summit clash here on Friday.

Sooryavanshi's 80-ball 175, which comprised a record 15 sixes and as many fours, propelled India to an imposing 411 for 9 after England opted to bowl first.Bruised and battered following Sooryavanshi's brutal onslaught, England's innings ended at 311 in 40.2 overs after being set an improbable target of 412 against a well-rounded bowling attack.

Caleb Falconer top-scored for England with a scintillating 67-ball 115, leaving a lasting impression on the biggest stage while helping his side reduce the margin of defeat. This was after the 14-year-old Sooryavanshi produced a knock for the ages and raced to the three-figure mark in a mere 55 balls to become the second fastest centurion in this competition.

The triumph, which ensured India's continued dominance in the age-group showpiece, could be attributed to a robust domestic structure, vast talent pool, exposure to advanced coaching, high-quality preparation, and passion for the game among the country's youth.India last won the tournament in 2022. Once India crossed 400 in the final, they were the overwhelming favourites to emerge victorious, and that is exactly how the script panned out, with the bowlers performing as a collective outfit. Sooryvanshi's knock is the record for the best individual score in a U-19 World Cup final and is also the highest team total in the summit showdown of the tournament.The opener exploded when it mattered the most, reaching his fifty in just 32 balls and continued in the same vein to torment the English bowlers with his wide range of strokes. His second fifty came off just 23 balls. As many as 150 of his 175 runs came off boundaries, thanks to his 15 sixes and as many fours during a knock in which he literally toyed with the opposition attack and turned the Harare Sports Club into his playground.He now holds the record for most sixes in a Youth ODI innings, surpassing his own 14 maximums against UAE at ICCA Dubai in December.

Former BCCI acting president **CK Khanna** on Friday lauded the Indian team and batting prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi for winning a record-extending sixth U-19 World Cup title in Harare, Zimbabwe. —*PTI*

RANJI TROPHY

K'taka bundles out Mumbai for just 120 on Day 1

MUMBAI, 6 FEB

Prasidh Krishna, Vidwath Kaverappa, and Shreyas Gopal wreaked havoc before Mayank Agarwal scored an unbeaten half-century as Karnataka put themselves firmly in the driver's seat on day one of their Ranji Trophy quarterfinals against Mumbai here on Friday.

Mumbai's decision to bat first backfired as Karnataka bowlers ran through the hosts' lineup. Pacers Prasidh (3/21) and Kaverappa (3/38) and leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal (3/4) claimed three wickets each to bundle Mumbai out for 120 in 48.1 overs.

At stumps, Karnataka reached 110 for 2, trailing by just 10 runs, courtesy Agarwal's unbeaten 54 off 81 balls. Mumbai endured a shaky start, losing Yashasvi Jaiswal, Musheer Khan, and Siddhesh Lad inside 14 overs to slump to 39 for 3.Mumbai 120 all out in 48.1 overs (Akhil Herwadkar 60; Prasidh Krishna (3/21), Vidwath Kaverappa (3/38), and Shreyas Gopal (3/4) lead by 10 runs against Karnataka 110/2 in 26 overs.

Opener Akhil Herwadkar fought a lone battle, scoring a patient 60 off 138 deliveries and contributing half of his team's total. However, he found little support at the other end as Mumbai lost seven wickets for just 50 runs.

In reply, KL Rahul (28) and Mayank provided Karnataka with a brisk start, racing to 33 without loss in five overs.

Rahul played the aggressor, scoring at better than a run-a-ball during his 26-ball knock, as the duo took on Mumbai skipper Shardul Thakur with a flurry of boundaries. —*PTI*

T20 WC opener: India look for a winning start against USA

All 20 captains of participating teams at the T20 World Cup during a photoshoot -T20WC

MUMBAI, 6 FEB

The weight of expectations will sit lightly on their shoulders when a marauding India open their T20 World Cup campaign against a spirited USA here on Saturday, hoping to become the first team to defend the coveted crown.

The USA team won eight of their nine matches last year and is coming into this T20 World Cup with a three-week camp in Sri Lanka, ensuring an adequate buildup even though they cross paths with higher-ranked teams only in world events.

Harshit Rana is set to be ruled out

Young India speedster Harshit Rana was on Friday ruled out of the T20 World Cup because of a knee injury sustained in a warm-up game here, with skipper Suryakumar Yadav admitting that he was "not looking good".

Fellow pacer **Mohammed Siraj** has been drafted in to replace Rana in the squad, according to reliable BCCI sources.

Pakistan eye Super Eight: Salman

Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha on Friday said the team will try to shut out the off-field noise surrounding its planned boycott of the India match and instead focus on winning the remaining group games to qualify for the T20 World Cup Super Eight stage.Pakistan, who won the title in 2009, are coming into the tournament in the wake of their decision to boycott the 15 February group game against arch-rivals India in solidarity with Bangladesh, who were replaced by Scotland after refusing to travel to India citing security concerns.

SL Cricket asks Pakistan to reconsider boycott of India game

Sri Lanka Cricket has urged Pakistan to reconsider its planned boycott of a Twenty20 World Cup game against India in Colombo next week, saying a forfeited match could hit the tourism sector of a country still recovering from an economic collapse. De Silva wrote to its counterparts Pakistan Cricket Board. —*PTI*

SCOTLAND OUT TO PROVE A POINT AGAINST WI

KOLKATA, 6 FEB

Scotland will look to show their last-minute entry into the T20 World Cup was no fluke when they open their campaign against two-time champions West Indies here on Saturday, turning an unexpected opportunity into a chance to rattle bigger rivals.

Following negotiations with the Bangladesh Cricket Board for close to a month, the ICC were eventually forced to replace Bangladesh with Scotland, who thus made a dramatic entry to the global showpiece barely two weeks before the start.

Bangladesh had four group matches scheduled in India, including three in Kolkata, but the BCB remained adamant about not travelling, citing "security concerns".It all began after the BCCI, on 3 January, instructed Kolkata Knight Riders to release Mustafizur Rahman from their IPL 2026 squad amid deteriorating relations between India and Bangladesh. —*PTI*

T20 WC 2026 WARM-UPS

India A hands 130-run defeat to Namibia; Italy beats UAE

BENGALURU, 6 FEB

India A handed a heavy 130-run defeat to Namibia in the T20 World Cup warm-up match held at the CoE Ground in Bengaluru on Friday.

After Riyan Parag's 39-ball 69 took India A to 197 for eight, a combined bowling effort bowled out Namibia for 67 inside 13 overs.

Gurjapneet Singh, Mayank Yadav, Ashok Sharma, and Vipraj Nigam picked two wickets each while Ayush Badoni and Ravi Bishnoi claimed one each as well.

Only Jan Frylinck (12) and Dylan Leicher (22) entered the double-digit figures from Namibia.

Earlier, India A opted to bat and lost Priyansh Arya and Urvil Patel early in the innings. Naman Dhir and Parag then added 111 runs for the third wicket before both fell in the 14th over. Ashutosh Sharma scored 35 off 21 balls to help India A finish close to the 200-run mark. In the other game played at the M.A Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai, Italy thrashed the UAE by 112 runs. —*PTI*

Delhi court denies bail to Olympian Sushil

NEW DELHI, 6 FEB

A Delhi court on Friday refused to grant bail to Olympian Sushil Kumar in the murder case of former junior national wrestling champion Sagar Dhankar, saying the possibility that the accused may influence witnesses "cannot be ruled out".

Additional Sessions Judge Sushil Kumar was hearing the bail application filed by Kumar in the case of Dhankar's killing at the Chhatrasal Stadium here.

"It is important to mention that many other material witnesses are yet to be examined and the possibility of influencing such material witnesses by applicant/accused Sushil Kumar cannot be ruled out," the court said. It noted that the allegations against Kumar are serious in nature, and his bail plea was also rejected by the Supreme Court last year. —*PTI*

India women knocked out

QINGDAO, 6 FEB

India's title defence in the women's team event came to a disappointing end after a 0-3 loss to a second-string China in the quarterfinals of the Badminton Asia Team Championships here on Friday. India had won a historic gold medal in the previous edition in 2024, but the absence of the talismanic PV Sindhu due to a niggle made the task of defending the title a tough one. World No. 42 Tanvi Sharma, who had been leading the charge in the first singles with two wins earlier in the tournament, failed to provide a positive start, losing 9-21, 9-21 to World No. 10 Gao Fang Jie in a lop-sided opener.

The 17-year-old Tanvi, a world junior championships silver medallist, struggled to match the pace of the Chinese shuttler throughout the contest. —*PTI*

GYANESHWARI WINS 53KG GOLD

MODINAGAR, 6 FEB

Gyaneshwari Yadav clinched the 53kg senior gold medal while Koyel Bor smashed five national records across the youth and junior sections at the National Weightlifting Championships here on Friday. Representing All India Police, Gyaneshwari, a Commonwealth Championships gold medallist, lifted a total of 186kg (83 kg+103kg) to take home the senior gold.

West Bengal's Koyel was a kilogram behind Gayneshwari as she heaved a total of 185kg (83kg+102kg), smashing three new national records in the Youth section. She surpassed the previous mark of 78 kg in snatch, 99 kg in clean and jerk and 175 kg in overall total. She also registered two junior national records, surpassing 81 kg in snatch and 181 kg in overall total.Veerjeet Kaur of Railways Sports Control Board rounded out the podium with a total of 182kg (81kg+101kg). —*PTI*

DAVIS CUP CLASH

India's home advantage against Netherlands

BENGALURU, 6 FEB

The faster playing conditions in Bengaluru are expected to suit Dhakshineswar Suresh more than India's top singles player Sumit Nagal as the hosts take on the Netherlands in the Davis Cup Qualifier round one tie, starting Saturday.

With Nagal returning from a minor hip injury, India is likely to lean heavily on Dhakshineswar's ability to exploit the quicker surface.

The conditions reward first-strike tennis and aggressive shot-making, an area where Dhakshineswar has shown he can thrive under pressure.

Nagal has been recovering well and has looked increasingly comfortable in practice, but questions remain over how his body will respond once the tie moves into high-intensity match play.

Dhakshineswar Suresh -PTI

Draper makes winning return

Jack Draper made his return to action with an emphatic victory for Great Britain in their Davis Cup first round qualifier in Norway on Thursday, while his teammate Cameron Norrie also won, to give the visitors a 2-0 lead.

Draper beat Norwegian World No. 313 Viktor Durasovic 6-2, 6-2 as he played his first competitive match since suffering a bruised bone in the summer. The 24-year-old, now ranked 13 in the world, enjoyed a breakthrough season in 2025, when he won his first Masters titles in Indian Wells and broke into the top four, before the injury to his playing arm.

"It's been a really difficult time since I've been away from the sport. I knew I had to keep on practising my hardest and learn about myself," Draper said. —*PTI*

Boxam Elite: Nitu, Preeti, Jadumani storm into semis

LA NUCIA, 6 FEB

Former world champion Nitu Ghanghas, Asian Games bronze medallist Preeti Pawar, and Jadumani Singh punched their way into the semifinals, ensuring Indian boxers secured 19 medals at the Boxam Elite International here.

The Indian women's team, under the guidance of new head coach Santiago Nieva, has confirmed 12 medals, while the seven male boxers progressed to the semifinals.

Nitu (51kg) was in imperious form, shutting out Canada's McKenzie Wright with a commanding unanimous decision win to secure her place in the last four.

Preeti (54kg) followed with a clinical showing against Spain's Maria Gonzalez, forcing an abandonment in Round 3 after dictating the contest with sustained pressure.

Poonam (54kg) added another emphatic 5-0 victory over Thailand's Natnicha Chongprongklang, while Priya (60kg) and Pranjal (65kg) registered unanimous wins against Spain's Laura Galano and Czech boxer Viktorie Jilkova, respectively. —*PTI*